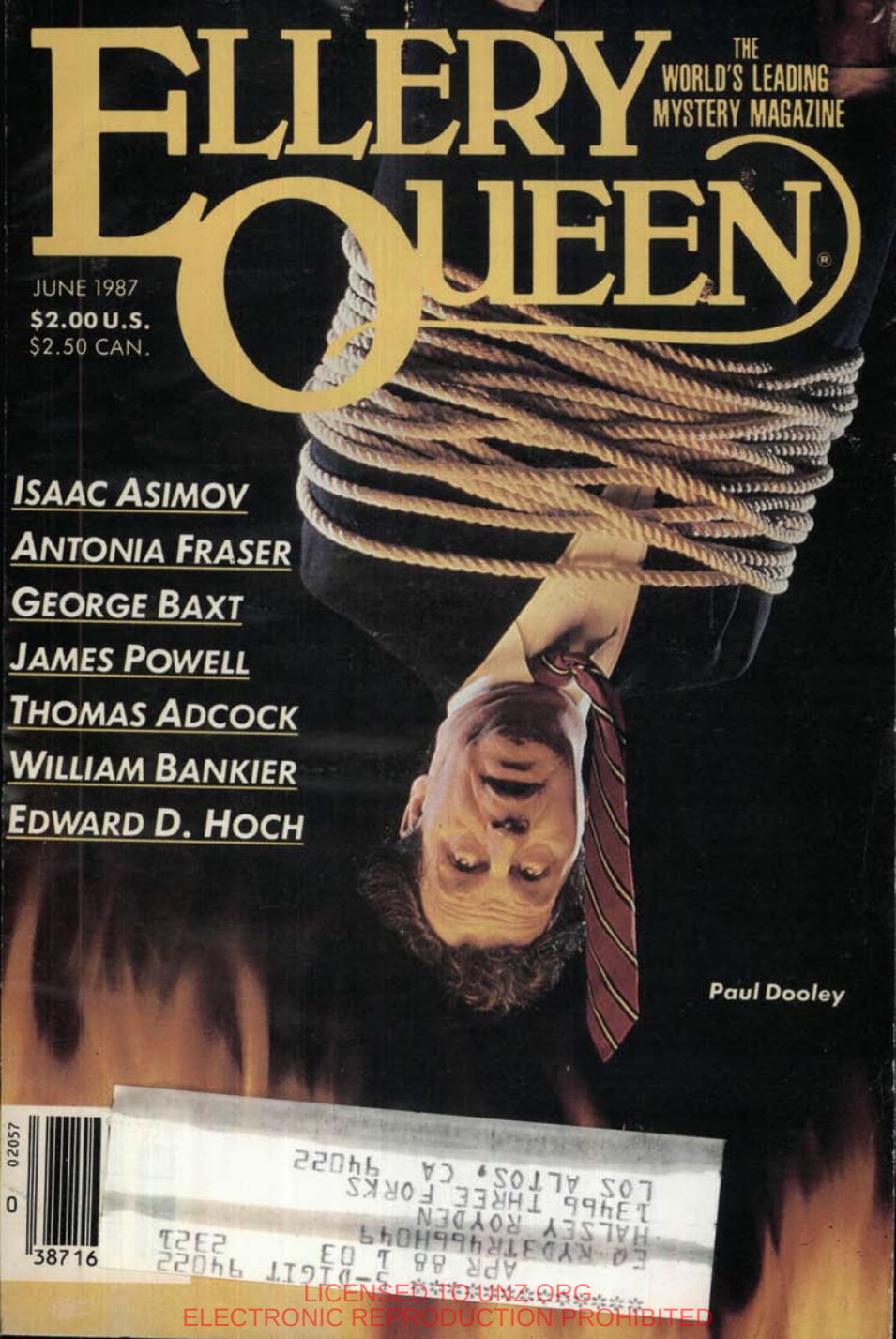
ELLERY QUEEN

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

JUNE 1987
$2.00 U.S.
$2.50 CAN.

ISAAC ASIMOV
ANTONIA FRASER
GEORGE BAXT
JAMES POWELL
THOMAS ADCOCK
WILLIAM BANKIER
EDWARD D. HOCH



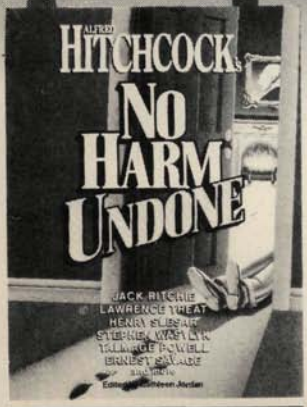
Paul Dooley

02057
0
38716

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

UNCOVER NEW WORLDS

With These New Anthologies from Longmeadow Press



Alfred Hitchcock's world of mystery and suspense

Alfred Hitchcock's No Harm Undone
Edited by Cathleen Jordan
The master of suspense opens his files to compile 24 stories of mystery and intrigue, from some of today's most outstanding suspense authors: Lawrence Treat, Talmage Powell, Jack Ritchie, Henry Slesar and many others.
$7.95/#7533

Ellery Queen's world of ghostly beings

Ellery Queen's Blighted Dwellings
Edited by Eleanor Sullivan
Renowned writers such as Ruth Rendell, Honore de Balzac, Lilly Carlson and others invite mystery fans to enter homes inhabited by the spectres of the mind, in this collection of 23 ghostly tales.
$7.95/#7536

Pick them up today at your nearby Waldenbooks store. And while you're there, check out the Waldenbooks Mystery Club, a captivating book club with free membership a monthly newsletter and special savings for mystery and intrigue fans. Sign up today!

America finds it at

Waldenbooks®

Books • Audio • Video • Magazines • Book Clubs • Special Orders
Over 975 stores nationwide.

To order call toll-free 1-800-543-1300, Operator #390

(Alaska and Hawaii call 1-800-545-1000, Operator #390)

SK271

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN®

Our cover model this month
is actor
PAUL DOOLEY

3 **The Spy and the Short-Order Cipher** / Edward D. Hoch
20 **Stroke of Genius** / George Baxt
30 **Room To Hide** / Brendan DuBois
44 **Betsy's Dictionary** / Billie Lee Powers
50 **The Ear-Reddening Move of Shusaku** / Jonathan Wood
62 **Wingtips** / James Powell
78 **On the Battlements** / Antonia Fraser
87 **The Stamp** / Isaac Asimov
98 **Watched Like Birds** / Barbara Hafen
105 **They *Will* Do It** / Jeffry Scott and Richard Simpson
115 **Oil and Water** / William Bankier
129 **A Hot Summer Night** / Joel Newman
135 **Cracker Jack** / Thomas Adcock

94 **The Jury Box** / Allen J. Hubin
156 **Index to Volume 89**

Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A TERRIFYING NEW MASTERWORK BY

FREDERIK POHL

Terror

Clouded in secrecy and protected from land, sea, and air, Project Vulcan would tap the life-energy of the Earth's core. The doomsday bomb carefully placed at the weakest edge of an underwater volcano off the Hawaiian coast would cover the Earth in a dust cloud that would bring food production to a grinding halt.

Now Vulcan has fallen into the hands of terrorists. And the world watches as they grip the detonator—and make their demands.

"A daring writer...Pohl has always been willing to try something new in his fiction."
—A Reader's Guide to Science Fiction

BERKLEY SCIENCE FICTION $2.95

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Rand story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

"It could be a simple cipher," Rand told Ellis Arcone, assistant director of the Monitoring Service. "Speeding up dots and dashes of International Morse Code to sound like radio static isn't new, of course, but it can slip by an inexperienced monitor. Combined with simple substitution cipher, it can prove quite effective . . ."

THE SPY AND THE SHORT-ORDER CIPHER

by EDWARD D. HOCH

The main thing Lisa Dunbroke disliked about working Saturday nights was that she always got the job of taking the evening's receipts to the night-deposit box at the bank in the next block. It wasn't far to walk, and there were always people on the streets in this section of London, but she was still a bit uneasy about transporting that much cash.

It was bad enough working at an American-style fast-food place like the Golden Griddle. Most neighborhood people had fought vigorously against its opening the previous year, and Lisa had become something of an outcast since taking the job there. "Selling out to the Yanks," old Mrs. Donoghue had said, "that's what you're doing!"

"It's a job, isn't it?" Lisa had retorted. "U.S. money's as good as any other, and young people like the place. It's crowded all the time in the evenings."

And so it was, especially on Saturdays. The demand for hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and other American-style fare seemed unlimited. Even with a McDonald's and a Burger King competing only a few blocks away, the Golden Griddle did well. Most evenings Mr.

© *1987 by Edward D. Hoch.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Blaine, the night manager, took the cash to the bank himself, but on Saturdays it was so busy he couldn't leave, so he sent Lisa instead, just before her shift ended at midnight.

On this Saturday in mid-August, the streets were wet from an earlier shower. As Lisa walked quickly through the late-night crowd on her way to the bank, she marveled at the way the damp pavement caught and reflected the lights. It was pretty, and she'd never thought of The Strand as being especially pretty before.

Suddenly she noticed a motor scooter weaving through the traffic to the curb lane, heading toward her. The driver was hunched over the handlebars and a pink-haired young punk rode behind, his face partly hidden by dark wraparound glasses. Before she could avoid it, the punk reached out and snared the strap of her purse and wrenched it from her shoulder, throwing her off balance to the street. She yelled, but the scooter was speeding away. The pink-haired passenger turned to give her a fleeting gap-toothed grin, her shoulder bag held aloft like a trophy of combat.

That would have been the last she ever saw of it and the bank deposit had it not been for the sudden intervention of a stranger. He was a sharp-eyed man in his early thirties who'd been walking with a furled umbrella about twenty paces behind her. Seeing what had happened, he hesitated only an instant. As the motor scooter roared past him with a renewed burst of power, he drove the umbrella through the spokes of the front wheel. There was a terrible clatter of metal as the scooter skidded to a halt and the driver and passenger went sprawling in the street. As the young thief stumbled to his feet, the man grabbed the purse from his unresisting grip and both young men, scraped and bleeding, dashed away from their abandoned scooter on foot, disappearing around the next corner.

Lisa picked herself up, examining her painfully skinned knees and ruined pantyhose. Then she raised her eyes to the man who'd hurried toward her with her bag. "I don't know how to thank you," she mumbled automatically, reaching for it gratefully.

"You look as if you could use a drink and some patching up. Could I take you back to my hotel for a drink? I'm afraid it's too late for a pub."

"I don't— I was on my way to the bank in the next block."

"Please allow me to escort you there, and then I'll renew my offer of a drink." When he saw her hesitation he added, with a touch of formality, "My name is Hugh Salisbury. I'm a lecturer in English at the University of York . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the course of his years as director of the Department of Concealed Communications, Rand had often visited the BBC Monitoring Service at Caversham Park near Reading. Oddly enough, though he and Leila had settled near Reading following his retirement so she could lecture at the University, he'd rarely thought of the big old mansion that housed the Monitoring Service, or the scores of people who worked around the clock keeping tabs on foreign broadcasts of every description. Now he was back, most unexpectedly, driving up to the impressive front entrance as if the years had slipped away and he was once more in the employ of British Intelligence.

Ellis Arcone, assistant director of the Monitoring Service, met Rand at the front door. He was a short, balding man in his late forties who'd been an East European monitor the last time Rand visited the place.

"Good to see you again, Rand. It must be ten years."

"Closer to eleven."

Arcone led the way along the marble-floored hallway Rand remembered from the old days. "Enjoying your retirement?" he asked.

"Very much, but Hastings is forever prevailing upon me to help out with something. He phoned yesterday and said you had a bit of a problem here. I live nearby so he asked me to take a look."

"It's not really a problem—more of a puzzle. However, I felt it fell within the guidelines for a reportable incident as laid out in directive 78-WQ. Are you familiar with that one?"

Rand allowed himself a slight smile. "We used somewhat different nomenclature when I was at Double-C."

"Here's my office. Step inside and I'll show you the printout."

It was the same office Rand remembered from the previous assistant director, though Arcone had imposed his own personality and ideas of order upon it. The bookshelves were neat to the point of perfection and the desk was bare except for a single pile of morning mail in the exact center. "I've spent some time in this room," Rand remarked.

"I imagine you have. Has it changed much?"

"There was no computer terminal in my day. And you're a good deal neater than your predecessor."

"I dare say! Old Cox was a bit disorganized." He opened the top drawer of the desk and extracted a single sheet of paper. Rand could see that it came from a roll of perforated computer-printout paper. "This was transmitted yesterday morning at such an ultra high speed it sounded like static. Our East German monitoring section

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

picked it up. It was transmitted from this country, on a popular East German frequency.

Rand scanned the brief line of characters. There were 42 letters in all: SLPJZOTYVVJVSLIXVIJJRKLIURPEZXYKCFFBWFIGRK. "Too few letter frequencies to mean much," he said, "but it could be a simple cipher. Speeding up dots and dashes of International Morse Code to sound like radio static isn't new, of course, but it can slip by an inexperienced monitor. Combined with a simple substitution cipher, it can prove quite effective."

"Can you decipher it?"

"Maybe." Rand took a pencil and wrote out the letters of the alphabet on two strips of paper, which he then moved back and forth experimentally. "I thought so. Yesterday's date was the eighteenth. I once knew a drug-runner in Brighton who used this same cipher. It changes daily with the date. For yesterday we line up the eighteenth letter of the alphabet, *R*, over the *A* in the lower alphabet. He showed Arcone:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

"You see there, *R* equals *A*, *S* is *B*, and so on. Today's the nineteenth, so in messages sent today *S* would equal *A*. There being twenty-six letters in the alphabet, you start over again at 1—though rather than having *A* equal *A* on the first and twenty-seventh, which you don't want, the following day's cipher is used on those two days, with *B* equaling *A*. The cipher is easy to remember and sufficiently secure when combined with some other means of concealment like ultra fast transmission."

"What does the message say?"

"Let me decipher it. The beginning, SLP, is BUY in plaintext."

Rand was silent while he finished deciphering the message. Then he read it. *"Buy six cheeseburgers Saturday night. Look for Pat."*

"Cheeseburgers." Ellis Arcone removed his glasses and placed a hand over his tired eyes. "Well, I've done my part. It's in your hands now."

At about that same time on Tuesday morning, Hugh Salisbury was paying another visit to the Golden Griddle fast-food restaurant on The Strand. He hadn't planned to show this high a profile, but then he hadn't planned on the events of last Saturday night, either. When he acted on impulse and shoved his umbrella through the spokes of that fleeing motor scooter, he blew his cover in a very real

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sense. Now Lisa Dunbroke knew him, and so did her boss, Mr. Blaine, and her co-workers, Tex Tucker and Ginny Peters. It probably didn't matter. The Golden Griddle stakeout was no doubt a dead end like all the others. Still, he had to learn to control his emotions better. Another slip-up like Saturday night's could cost him his life someday.

"Hello there," Lisa greeted him as he entered. The morning business was slow and she was alone behind the counter. "You ready for lunch?"

"Just a Coke for now. I'm working up an appetite."

"Do you eat and drink this much when you're teaching up in York?"

"Hardly," he told her with a laugh. She had a cheerful smile he really loved. "But I'm on holiday for the rest of the month so I might as well take advantage of it. Come join me and I'll buy you a soft drink."

She hesitated only an instant. "Well, maybe coffee." Glancing over her shoulder toward the back room, she called out, "Tex, I'm taking my break. Watch the counter, will you?"

"Sure!" Tex Tucker was a rangy American from Dallas, with sandy hair and freckles. He was in his mid-twenties, about Lisa's age, and claimed he was earning money to return to the University of London for the autumn term. Lisa had told Hugh she doubted that he had any real intention of going back.

"He likes girls too much," she'd confided when they'd had coffee late Sunday night after work. "He's been dating Ginny."

"Has he really?" Hugh was only mildly interested in the Golden Griddle employees' love lives, but he made it a practice to listen to gossip. Sometimes one picked up valuable scraps of information that way.

The manager came in while they were in the booth together and called over to Lisa as he removed his suitcoat. "Haven't you thanked the man enough already?"

"I'm on my break, Mr. Blaine," she answered pointedly. "And it was your bank deposit he saved, remember?"

Hugh ordered another Coke to keep Blaine happy and Tex brought it over with his usual swagger. "Are all Americans like you?" Lisa asked him with mock disgust.

"Only the lucky ones," Tex answered.

As Hugh paid for the Cokes, he heard Blaine bellowing from the freezer, "Tex, damn it, you haven't thawed the chips! And we need

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more hamburger patties. What sort of place do you think I'm running?"

Tex loped back to the freezers and they heard him say, "You know Tuesdays are slow till evening—"

"With you in charge, they'll stay that way. Where's Ginny?"

"Right here, Mr. Blaine!" The redhead had just arrived. She gave Lisa a conspiratorial wink as she slid out of her coat and into her uniform shirt with *Ginny* embroidered over the left pocket. She was better-looking than Lisa, with a fuller figure. Salisbury had noticed young men hanging around in the evenings, obviously hoping for a date with her.

Tuesday was payday at the Golden Griddle, and when Lisa went back behind the counter Mr. Blaine gave her an envelope. Just before noon, as Hugh was preparing to leave, Leo McNulty came in for his envelope. Leo was an older man, past forty, who worked only part time, on weekend nights. "Always on time when it's payday, aren't you?" Blaine grumbled as he handed over the envelope. "Five o'clock is when you're due, remember."

Salisbury waved to Lisa as he went out. He stopped at the tobacco shop across the street before returning to his car, parked near the Savoy Hotel. That was when he made his second mistake.

He took the little tape recorder from the glove compartment and sat for a moment collecting his thoughts, gazing off toward the river. Then he switched it on and began speaking into it.

"Report of surveillance at the Golden Griddle fast-food restaurant, 1100 hours, Tuesday, 19 August—"

The door on the driver's side was yanked suddenly open. Hugh Salisbury only had time to see the blade of the knife and the face behind it.

Rand drove into London Tuesday afternoon to deliver his report personally to Hastings. He enjoyed the occasional trips up to his old office overlooking the Thames, even when Hastings seemed preoccupied as he did today. "What is it, Rand? I'm always glad to see you, but this afternoon—"

"You asked me to drop in at the BBC Monitoring Service in Reading, remember?"

"Oh, yes. You could have just phoned it in. I didn't mean for you to make the trip—"

Rand handed him the decoded message. "This was transmitted on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an East German frequency yesterday morning. Mean anything to you?"

"Buy six cheeseburgers Saturday night. Look for Pat."

"Do we assume cheeseburgers are a code word for atomic weapons, or are we simply dealing with a hungry spy?"

Hastings picked up his pipe and began filling it. Rand knew he was playing for time, weighing how much classified information he could safely share with a retired bureau chief. "I wish to hell we'd had this message a few hours earlier," he said at last. "It might have saved a man's life."

"Who?"

"Hugh Salisbury. He was after your time. Someone stabbed him to death in his car near the Savoy Hotel around noon today."

"How do you know this is connected with it?"

Hastings nibbled at his lower lip. "I suppose it's safe enough to tell you. This is all classified, you understand."

"Of course."

"There's a man named Crimmons, a middle-level employee of the Foreign Office, who's suspected of selling information to East Germany. Trouble is we can't prove it. He's under twenty-four-hour surveillance but we haven't caught him in the act of passing anything, or even meeting any Communist agents."

"If there's no evidence, why is he under suspicion in the first place?"

"East Germany has been receiving certain information which could only be coming from him. We think he's using a go-between, possibly a lover, to deliver the information."

"Male or female?"

"We don't even know that."

"How do you know this message is part of it?"

"Last week Crimmons met someone at a hotel room in Mayfair. The other person brought lunch and we found the remains of it. Fast food from an American-style place on The Strand called the Golden Griddle. We think Crimmons's contact might work there."

"How come?"

"Hugh Salisbury did some smart detective work on that. On take-out orders, the Golden Griddle employee places the hamburger, cheeseburger, chips, soft drink, or whatever in a large white bag with the GG trademark on it. You've probably seen their commercials on the telly. The bag is folded shut and the cash-register receipt is stapled to the fold. That's the way it's always done. But the bag

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

found in that hotel room had no receipt and no staple marks. Salisbury concluded the food wasn't purchased in the ordinary way but was taken out by an employee."

"It makes sense," Rand agreed. "A fast-food restaurant would be a perfect cover for many things, from drug-dealing to passing government secrets."

"Exactly. Salisbury was assigned to keep an eye on the place and report anything unusual. Unfortunately for him, on last Saturday night something very unusual took place."

"What was that?"

"The Golden Griddle closes around midnight, or a little after. Each night before closing, the manager or one of the employees deposits the evening's receipts at a night depository in the next block. One of the young women employees took it last Saturday and Salisbury followed her to see if she contacted anyone. A couple of punks on a motor scooter came by and grabbed her purse. Salisbury knew he should do nothing, but in a pure reflex action he jammed his umbrella through the spokes of the scooter and recovered the purse. The two punks got away.

Rand nodded. "He blew his cover."

"Exactly. The Golden Griddle manager and the other employees all saw him and met him. I gather they made him something of a hero. He went back Sunday and again this morning, deciding to act as if he was smitten with the girl he rescued, name of Lisa Dunbroke. He was posing as a university lecturer on holiday from York, but somebody there got wise. Maybe his reflexes were too fast for a lecturer."

"You say he was stabbed?"

Hastings nodded. "An Inspector Franz is in charge of the investigation, but I don't expect he'll find much."

"Could it have been a coincidental robbery-slaying?"

"His money wasn't touched, though a pocket tape recorder seems to be missing. He used it to dictate notes."

"A bad habit. People in his line of work should rely on their memories."

Hastings stared down at the message Rand had brought him. "Saturday night. It sounds as if the Golden Griddle employee—this Pat or whomever—already has the information in hand. We'll need to have people there on Saturday, but the place will be so crowded we could easily miss the transfer if we don't know which employee

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to watch." He paused and then asked, "Could you help us out, Rand? It would mean a great deal."

Rand thought of the dead man and wondered if he'd had a family. "Of course I'll help if I can. But I have no official status."

"Just talk to Inspector Franz, and take a look at the Golden Griddle. We need suggestions on how to proceed Saturday night. Right now we have one big advantage over our killer. We know when the information is to be transferred, and he doesn't know we know."

Rand had dealt with Scotland Yard on previous occasions, and he was familiar with detective-inspectors who seemed baffled or indifferent when confronted with a murder case. Inspector Franz was neither. He looked more like a banker or stock broker than a policeman, and he seemed completely in charge when Rand saw him on Wednesday.

"Mr. Hastings said you'd be stopping by for a report," he said, shaking Rand's hand and motioning toward a chair in his office. "I can understand the concern over at MI5, but I don't believe there's any international angle to the killing. We have a pretty good idea who did it."

Rand was surprised. "Who?"

"Couple of punk rockers named Eddie Slater and Jeremy Hayes. They're the ones who tried to snatch the purse from that girl last Saturday night. The scooter they abandoned was registered in Slater's name. We've been looking for them ever since. I figure they spotted Salisbury walking along the street, followed him to his car, and stabbed him in revenge for what he did to them on Saturday."

"It could be as simple as that," Rand admitted. "But Hastings has asked me to look into some other angles. Have you spoken with the employees at the Golden Griddle?"

"Of course."

"Is one of them named Pat?"

"Male or female?"

"I don't know."

Franz flipped open a manila folder on his desk and shuffled through some papers, stopping at one. "The shift that worked Saturday night when the purse-snatching was attempted was also working Tuesday noon at the time of the killing." He tapped the names off with his pencil. "Lisa Dunbroke, Tex Tucker, Ginny Peters. There's also a manager named Blaine and a fifth employee named

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Leo McNulty, an older chap who works only on weekends. No one named Patrick or Patricia."

"They have alibis for the time of the killing?"

The inspector looked just the least bit uncomfortable. "As it happens, they don't, Mr. Rand. We can bracket the death within a thirty-minute period, from the time Salisbury left the restaurant until the body was found by a patrolman checking overtime parkers. But during that period each of the employees was away for several minutes for various purposes. Any of them could have followed him to the car and killed him. stopped in briefly for his pay envelope."

Rand stood up. "You've been very helpful, Inspector. You'll let me know if anything turns up on Eddie Slater or his friend?"

"Of course. Where are you off to?"

Rand glanced at his watch. "It's lunchtime. I thought I might try one of those famous American hamburgers."

The Golden Griddle was located on the south side of The Strand about halfway between the luxury of the grand old Savoy Hotel and the hustle of Charing Cross Station. Stepping inside, Rand was reminded of the ubiquitous fast-food chains he'd encountered on his most recent trip to America.

A pretty young woman wearing a blouse with the name *Lisa* stitched above the pocket greeted him at the counter. "What will it be today, sir?"

"A plain hamburger, I think."

"Fine. Chips with it?"

"Why not? And a Coke, too, please." As he waited, he extracted some pound notes from his wallet, casually asking, "Is Pat working today?"

"Pat? No one named Pat works here, sir."

"Maybe on one of the other shifts."

"No, I know everyone. There's no one named Pat."

Rand shrugged. "I must be mistaken."

"Here's your order."

He accepted the tray and carried it to one of the side booths. A man in a brown suit, wearing a poorly made toupee, appeared from the back room and came out to examine the booths. "Tex, come wipe off tables three and four," he called out.

A young man hurried out to do his bidding. When the brown-suited man moved closer, Rand was able to read the nameplate on his jacket—*P. Blaine, Manager.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Mr. Blaine, could I have a word with you?"

"What? Why? Do you have a complaint?"

"No, it's about Hugh Salisbury."

"Police?"

"I'm assisting with their inquiries."

Blaine slid into the cramped booth opposite Rand. He was an American, certainly, but probably one who'd lived some time in England. His accents were New York, smoothed out a bit with time. "What can I do for you?"

"One question, Mr. Blaine."

"What's that?"

"This fellow Tex who just came out behind the counter."

"Tex Tucker. He's from Dallas."

"What's his first name?"

"It's Tex, just like it says on his shirt."

"Pardon me, Mr. Blaine, but Tex is a nickname. What's his real first name? You must have a job application for him."

"Oh, sure. His name is Edgar, but he never uses it. I can't really blame him. Tex has a certain ring to it, don't you think?"

"Could you tell me a little about the attempted robbery?"

Another girl came out to serve at the counter and started chatting with Lisa. The name on her blouse was *Ginny*. "I know those two that tried to rob Lisa," Blaine was saying. "They used to hang around here. Bad business, both of them—especially the pink-haired one named Jeremy. I've seen him with a knife."

"The police are looking for them," Rand explained. "Tell me something about the shifts here. Do the same people always work together?"

"We operate a bit different from McDonald's and Burger King down the street. I'm in charge of this particular crew—Lisa and Tex and Ginny. We work Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, and Tuesday and Wednesday during the day. Another fellow, Leo, comes in to help out on Friday and Saturday nights because we're busier then. I work behind the counter myself those nights."

"How late are you open?"

"Till midnight, but we don't close if there are customers waiting. Some Saturday nights it's closer to twelve-thirty."

"Do you have many big orders, for a half dozen or a dozen hamburgers at a time?"

"Oh, yes—especially on weekends when there's a party or something."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rand finished his lunch. "Thank you, Mr. Blaine. You've been a big help."

"Always happy to cooperate with the police."

"One other thing—The P on your nameplate there. Is your first name Patrick?"

"It's Philip. Why do you ask?"

"Just wondering."

On Thursday, Rand met again with Hastings at his office. "Do you have anything for us?" the older man asked.

"A question. Assuming that this person Pat already has the papers to be delivered to the East Germans, why wait until Saturday to do it?"

"They only sent the radio message Monday morning. Presumably someone is coming from East Germany."

"Surely they have someone already in London who could be sent out for cheeseburgers at a moment's notice."

"Perhaps they're waiting for the fuss over Salisbury's death to die down."

"The message was sent before his death. I think there's some other reason to wait until Saturday."

Hastings was beginning to get interested. "You may be right. Any ideas?"

"I can think of two possibilities. There's a fellow named Leo McNulty who works only on weekends. And the manager, Philip Blaine, only works behind the counter then."

"What about this Pat business?"

"The others have shirts with their names embroidered on them. Maybe McNulty has a shirt with his name on it, too. I'll take a look tomorrow night and see."

"I plan to have a half dozen people in and around the place all night Saturday. We'll get him."

Rand wished he could be as certain as Hastings seemed to be.

On Friday night, back at the Golden Griddle, Rand saw a man he hadn't seen before working behind the counter with the others, wearing a *Leo* shirt. And Blaine was helping out in his suit. Rand watched the team of five waiting on customers, grilling meat, frying chips, ringing up sales. Ginny, Lisa, Tex, Leo, and Phil. No Pat.

Feeling depressed, he went outside and strolled down The Strand toward the Savoy Hotel. Hastings could have all the people he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wanted watching that place, it was still going to happen—the papers would be transferred right under their eyes.

Rand crossed the street and started up Southhampton without any goal in mind. Ahead, under a streetlight, he saw a group of young people talking and laughing among themselves. One of the males had a mane of pink hair. At first Rand thought it was merely coincidence—surely this couldn't be the man the police sought, standing here so openly—but when he crossed the street to avoid walking past them the pink-haired one and his friend started across after him, trying to head him off. "You lookin' for something, mister?" one of them said.

Rand decided to hold his ground.

"A couple of fellows named Eddie Slater and Jeremy Hayes. You wouldn't be them, would you?"

The one with the pink hair moved first. His hand came out of his pocket with a short length of chain wrapped around the knuckles. "A copper, are you?"

Rand saw the blow coming and easily avoided it, moving to one side and tripping the youth as he went by. The other one saw what was happening and ran off. Rand let him go and concentrated on the one on the ground. He pulled him to his feet and shoved him against the brick wall of a building.

"Let's have a talk," he said, only slightly out of breath. "It was you and your friend who tried to rob the girl from the Golden Griddle last Saturday, wasn't it?"

"Go to hell!"

"And then you stabbed the man who wrecked your scooter."

Rand's words got through to him and he looked frightened for the first time. "No! We didn't have nothing to do with that!"

Two policemen came around the corner with the other punk in tow. Following close behind, and looking apprehensive, was Inspector Franz.

He took Rand aside. "Mr. Rand! Are you all right?"

"I'm fine. Did you have a tail on me?"

"We've got the entire area buttoned up. Today and tomorrow both. Orders from higher up."

"Good! I believe Miss Dunbroke will be able to identify these two for you—at least so far as the purse-snatching is concerned."

Hastings had asked Rand to come in to the office on Saturday afternoon, and he hadn't needed any further urging. The case would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be wrapped up one way or another that night. Either they'd intercept the papers as they were being passed, or they would have failed.

"This is confidential," Hastings confided, "but I've had a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister herself. She's very anxious that Crimmons be brought to justice before he can defect behind the Iron Curtain. I'm supposed to pass the word the moment he can be arrested."

"As soon as you have the papers."

"Exactly. I'm depending on you, Rand."

"Will you have someone inside the restaurant?"

"Better than that. Since yesterday afternoon we've had a battery-powered microphone stuck beneath the counter. We can pick up every order as it's given. When somebody orders six cheeseburgers we'll have our man."

"Blaine tells me they often get large orders, especially on weekends. There will have to be something else, some countersign to identify the messenger."

"Like what?"

"I'm hoping we'll know it when we hear it. But we must be careful. If we move in too quickly on a false alarm it'll scare everyone off," Rand said.

"It would help if we knew which of the employees was planning to pass the papers."

Rand was staring at the calendar on the wall, suddenly excited. "I think I can tell you that. It has to do with why they waited until today."

"Today's the twenty-third of August. What's so special about today?"

"You'll see."

Hastings had arranged to commandeer a travel-agency office directly across the street from the Golden Griddle. From its darkened windows they could study the restaurant counter where, by eight o'clock that evening, lines were beginning to form. Tex and Lisa were working on the left side, with Tex frying fresh baskets of chips whenever he had a moment. Blaine was tending the grill himself, flipping burgers like an expert. Ginny Peters and the older man, Leo McNulty, worked the right end of the counter.

"Four hamburgers, a cheeseburger, three chips, three Cokes," a voice came over the speaker. They watched Lisa bustling to fill the order.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Maybe she'll deliver the papers on her way to the bank later," Hastings suggested.

Rand shook his head. "That sort of thinking got Salisbury killed. It'll be right there in front of us, under those bright lights."

Around nine-thirty, a teenaged girl went up to the counter. "Six cheeseburgers," she told Leo. "And six black coffees."

Hastings was on his feet, ready to move, but Rand restrained him. "That's not it. There'll be cheeseburgers only."

"But—"

"Sit tight. It's early yet."

Hastings went to the phone to converse with Franz, who was holding his men in reserve on the side streets. "There's no chance he can get away. We've got men with two-way radios in the Underground station."

"There's always a chance." Hastings prepared himself for disappointment. "We just have to play the odds and figure we'll win."

By ten-thirty, he was growing restless.

"Nothing's happening. They're wise to us. They've changed the delivery date."

"We've got another ninety minutes."

"The place stays open later on weekends. How do you know it will be before midnight?"

"Because after midnight will be the twenty-fourth."

Phil Blaine abandoned the grill to help wait on customers. Movies and plays were letting out and the late-night business was peaking. Traffic on The Strand had slowed to a crawl.

"Six cheeseburgers, please, and six bottles of German beer."

Rand snatched up the binoculars, aiming them across the street at a blond young man who'd just stepped up to the counter.

"Sorry, sir. We're not allowed to sell beer."

"Well, just the six cheeseburgers then."

"That's him!" Rand said. "Take him the instant he hits the street."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure. German beer, for God's sake!"

They converged on the young man from every direction, as Rand and Hastings dashed across the street between cars. Inspector Franz took the white paper bag from him as detectives gripped their startled prey.

"Check the bag!" Hastings shouted.

Franz opened it and peered inside. He looked up, disappointed. "Nothing but cheeseburgers."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Open them up!"

They found the canister of microfilm inside the fifth cheeseburger.

Rand had already explained it all to Hastings, but later, after the arrests had been made, he went over it again for Inspector Franz. "The intercepted message gave instructions to look for Pat. It didn't say 'ask for Pat,' but 'look for Pat.' What would a customer see when he or she looked at the clerks behind the counter? First names, neatly stitched above the pockets of their shirts. Ginny and Leo and Tex and Lisa. And Phil, if Blaine had worn one, too. But none of them was Pat."

"There's no Pat working there," Franz confirmed.

"I was stumped about that until I remembered that intercepted message in its simple substitution cipher. It was keyed to the day of the month. Last Monday, the eighteenth when *R* equaled *A*, the letters *PAT* would have been deciphered as *YJC*. Now, five days later, with the twenty-third letter of the alphabet above the *A*, *PAT* equals *TEX*."

"Tucker!"

"Exactly. Tex to his contact. The man Crimmons was using to funnel his secrets to the East Germans."

A little while later, Hastings was on the phone to Downing Street. "I don't want you to disturb the Prime Minister at this late hour, but when there's an opportunity you might tell her that Mr. Crimmons is being detained by Scotland Yard along with a friend of his named Tucker, who has confessed to killing Salisbury. We're also holding an unidentified East German national. Tucker was in the process of passing microfilmed documents to the East German at the time of the arrest.

"Where? Well, as a matter of fact, they were arrested at the Golden Griddle, a fast-food establishment on The Strand."

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE *invites you to...*

Rendezvous With Murder

on a unique mystery tour to England, the scene of so many classic mysteries. You'll visit the Old Bailey, attend private receptions with representatives from Scotland Yard and meet prominent English mystery writers.

As an extra-special feature, you'll participate in a "Murder Weekend" at a magnificent estate where you'll spend the weekend with a "killer." Here among the guests and staff will be a few less-than-genuine characters who will unveil a murderous scenario throughout the weekend. There will be plenty of clues (and a few red herrings) for you to follow. If you can figure out whodunit, an exciting prize awaits you!

But here's a chilling note: Each tour is limited to a very small number of amateur sleuths, so we recommend you reserve your place in the plot early. Don't miss this opportunity to play detective! Chills and thrills are guaranteed!

For FREE BROCHURE Call 1-800-428-7462. In California, 1-800-457-9515.

Or Mail To:
CTS / InterContinental Travel
1133 Taylor St., Dept. DVP
San Diego, CA 92110

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Telephone: ( ) _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

GEORGE BAXT

"You're the only one I can trust," Vernon told Gregory. "I certainly can't trust that greedy daughter of mine."

"I didn't get that impression," said Gregory, lying.

"Like hell you didn't. You can tell every time she looks at me her mouth is watering. Just like every time your niece looks at your art collection, her eyes turn into dollar signs. Thank God I've got my health and can look after myself. No one's going to do me out of what's mine."

The latest withering wickedness from one of our genre's most ingenious wits in residence . . .

STROKE OF GENIUS

by GEORGE BAXT

Gregory Barlow had always secretly admired Vernon Bigelow. Vernon was rich, he was an investment counselor. Gregory was always struggling to scratch out a living, he was an author. Vernon lived in a four-bedroom triplex on Fifth Avenue, facing Central Park, the zoo, and assorted muggers. Gregory lived in a cold-water walk-up railroad flat, which he shared with several mice and an assortment of roaches, overlooking a filthy, congested stretch of Ninth Avenue, a motley group of Spanish-speaking neighbors (all of whom owned blaring portable radios), and a select group of crack dealers. Gregory wasn't jealous of Vernon. He had accepted his lot from that moment as an infant when his eyes finally came into focus and realized the gurgling man and woman cooing at him were his parents.

Actually, most of Vernon's wealth was inherited—from his par-

© *1987 by George Baxt.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ents, his grandparents, a doting aunt, a crooked uncle he was quietly blackmailing, and a first wife (of four) who was darling enough to be hit by a Trailways bus at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street and die instantly. ("Whatever do you suppose she was doing *walking*?" asked Corinne Barlow, Gregory's dreadful niece, who was that kind of despicable snob only poverty could breed. It was Corinne who had introduced her uncle to Vernon Bigelow.)

"Unk, I've got a new girl friend," Corinne had said that Columbus Day noon over a cup of instant decaffeinated in her uncle's weary little kitchen. "*Very* rich. Well, that is, her father's very rich. Her father's Vernon Bigelow."

Gregory was busy finishing the *New York Times* crossword puzzle, which had another of its glaring errors: "Anna Lucasta" by O'Neill. "The idiots!" raged Gregory.

"Which idiots?" asked Corinne, steadying her cup of coffee, which had been set quivering by her uncle's hand crashing down on the table.

"Crossword-puzzle idiots! 'Anna Lucasta' was written by Philip Yordan, not by Eugene O'Neill. And they've got Della Reese in it again!"

"Don't you want to hear about my girl friend?" Gregory said nothing and Corinne ploughed onward, as he knew she would regardless. "I met Elyse Bigelow at that trendy new disco down on Avenue A, The Greedy Sow."

"So you dislike her already?"

"No, that's the name of the disco. Anyway, Elyse was trying to score with my date, and I was hoping she would because if he greeted anyone with 'Hi guys' once more I'd slit his throat. Anyway, to make a long story short—"

"Too late."

"—I introduced myself to Elyse and told her straight off if she wanted Harvey she was welcome to him, and she just screamed with laughter and threw her arms around me and kissed both my cheeks as though she'd just pinned me with the Croix de Guerre and asked if I'd like a cup of coffee and some girl talk. So I said yes and the next thing I know I'm in a stretch limousine longer than—"

"Your story."

"—the Holland Tunnel and then I'm in her apartment on Park Avenue, the foyer of which could house a small chic restaurant—"

"Oh, get on with it, for crying out loud!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, so by now I was sure she was rich, and when she told me her father was *the* Vernon Bigelow—"

"As opposed to *the* Stone of Scone."

"Well, surely you recognize his name?"

"Yes, I recognize it." One of Gregory's secret vices was gossip columns, especially the so-called society columns. It was always the same names and the same restaurants. Bill Blass this, Pauline Trigere that, Pat Buckley here, Swifty Lazar there, Bianca Jagger, etc., etc., and usually tucked in somewhere was Vernon Bigelow.

"Well, aren't you impressed?"

"I can't tell you about the last time I was impressed because even the thought of it makes me blush. The only hint I'll give you is that it involved a well known authoress of trash novels and the UCLA football team, eight of whom suffered heart attacks and never played again—at least not football."

"Anyway, Elyse and I have been seeing a lot of each other and she's introduced me to some really terrific guys. I've been dating one of them pretty steadily."

"And he's very wealthy."

"Well, I can't say for sure, but Elyse says he has his cavities filled with platinum. Anyway, Unk—" Gregory loathed her calling him Unk as much as he loathed her purplish orange hair that stuck up in ugly spikes and the way she painted her face like it belonged on an Incan totem pole "—I've met Vernon and I've told him all about you. How your books and short stories make a little money—"

"A very little money, be sure to specify."

"—and that you own some awfully good art that I'm sure is worth a good deal of money." When she smiled, she looked like a piranha in heat, and she was smiling. Gregory wondered how surprised she'd be if he socked her.

"Corinne, my few works of art are a lifetime's accumulation—" Gregory was in his early sixties "—acquired by missing meals, skipping dates, not buying new clothes when necessary, and I'll skip the rest of the hearts and flowers. They're my only assets. There were more but I had to sell some during some of my leaner periods—" he looked around at his sorry surroundings "—such as now."

Corinne paled and her voice grew husky. "You're not going to sell one of them? Not the Vickery or the Shahn or the Cadmus—or that darling Roger Baker feather?"

"What business is it of yours?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Corinne recognized the danger when her uncle's eyes narrowed into slits. "Well, they—they do brighten up this place."

"You don't."

"Oh, Unk." She didn't realize how revolting he found her when she grew flirtatious with him. "Vernon wants to meet you. He has a *huge* art collection and he has a publisher who wants to do a book on them. You know, a coffee-table book."

"Good heavens, do the rich still have coffee tables?" Gregory flung the newspaper aside, collected the cups and saucers, and carried them to the sink. Corinne had to shout over the torrent of running water as he fell to the washing up.

"He says he'll pay you well if you help him with the writing."

Gregory turned off the tap and looked at his niece over his shoulder. She looked like a floral offering at a Mafia funeral. "You mean he wants me to ghost the book for him?"

"You could use the money, couldn't you?"

"I've no other means of income at the moment," he told her, "short of attempting to sell you to the Arabs."

So Corinne set up a meeting with Gregory and Vernon, to be held at Vernon's private club, so chic and so private that the building was unnumbered. Gregory found it with the help of a compass and a seeing-eye dog, or so he liked to tell people. Amazingly, he and Vernon hit it off at once. Vernon was a tall, slim, good-looking man, who although he was fifty-nine didn't look a day over sixty five. As the afternoon wore on and out, he regaled Gregory with tales of his daily regimen—fifty pushups in the morning, hot water with tea and a slice of melba toast for breakfast, then five miles jogging in Central Park with a friend of his. In the afternoon after work, he went to his gym where he worked with the bar bells and the weights before an hour with his karate instructor. Gregory admired all this. His own idea of exercise was inserting a cassette in his VCR and then adjusting the tracker before settling back on the couch with a very dry vodka martini on the rocks. Vernon, of course, didn't drink—except for an occasional white-wine spritzer when he dined at the White House. ("Those two are such squares," he confided to Gregory, who was learning nothing new. "When I asked her what she thought of Tutu of South Africa, she said, 'Too too divine.' "

In the fourth hour of their meeting, Vernon finally brought up the subject of the book. In ten minutes, they struck a deal, almost all of it surprisingly in Gregory's favor. In fact, the sum of money Ver-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

non promised made his head swim, his eyes cross, and his mouth go dry. He couldn't believe it when Vernon whipped out his checkbook and wrote him a handsome advance. At last, thought Gregory, I can buy a microwave oven! A baked potato in seven minutes! Heaven!

Vernon became genuinely fond of Gregory and they started to see a lot of each other. He even visited Gregory in his Ninth Avenue apartment and commented, really meaning it, "Now this is real cozy." He admired Gregory's small but tasteful collection of art as opposed to his own vast one bought either for investment or the glamor of the artist's name. "Face it, Greg," he said one Sunday at brunch in Gregory's apartment, "I've got no real taste. I have the money with which to buy taste, but I don't even know which kind of taste to buy. Why don't you help me buy some stuff?"

"That still wouldn't be your taste. It would be mine."

"So what? You're the only one I can trust. I certainly can't trust that greedy daughter of mine."

"I didn't get that impression," said Gregory, lying.

"Like hell you didn't. You can tell every time she looks at me her mouth is watering. Just like every time your niece looks at your art collection, her eyes turn into dollar signs. Thank God I've got my health and can look after myself. No one's going to do me out of what's mine."

Vernon Bigelow suffered a crippling stroke that night while getting into bed. It paralyzed his left side and he lost his power of speech. His mouth was twisted cruelly out of shape and he couldn't control the drool that dripped out of the sides. It was said that it was while he was being transported to the hospital that Elyse had herself declared his conservator and gained control of his wealth.

When Gregory was permitted to visit Vernon, he couldn't believe the human wreckage in the wheelchair was the man he had secretly admired. Vernon had some strength left in his right hand and managed to scrawl a note to Gregory: "Beware relatives." Gregory was grateful when after only five minutes with Vernon, the nurse asked him to leave. He patted Vernon's right hand, promised to come back soon, and almost burst into tears when Vernon's eyes erupted.

Beware relatives.

Gregory slowly walked the two miles from Vernon's chic hospital on the East Side to his apartment on the other side of Manhattan deep in thought. He thought of himself in Vernon's situation and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the rapidity with which his niece would undoubtedly go about taking control of his art collection and what little else he had of value. Many of his books were first editions, and there were his own novels and stories. On occasion he'd received options from television and film companies, usually a nick-of-time bonanza just when he was on the verge of selling a painting. He recognized now that Vernon hated his daughter, and that the seeds of that hatred had probably been sown long before the stroke.

I hate Corinne, Gregory thought.

He took a deep breath. He truly did hate Corinne. Her stupidity, her snobbishness, her mode of dress, her face and hair, her lack of ethics, and the paucity of her ambitions other than to covet what little he owned. Thinking about her, he began to feel a little weak. He sat down on a park bench on Central Park South. It was there, a few minutes later, that a policeman found him.

He would later remember that when he tried to reach into his left jacket pocket for a handkerchief, he couldn't find his pocket. He remembered touching his left hand with his right hand and realizing the left was totally numb. He had wanted his handkerchief because he was drooling. He remembered trying to stand, but his left leg wouldn't support him and he fell back on the bench, struggling for breath. He tried not to panic, but when he wanted to shout for help all that came out of his mouth were meaningless, guttural noises.

When the policeman saw him, he recognized the symptoms of a stroke and called for help on his walkie-talkie.

Two months later, Gregory was back in his apartment in a wheelchair, at the mercy of his niece Corinne and a kindly neighbor, a young Puerto Rican man who by happy chance was an orderly at St. Clare's Hospital and knew how to deal with stroke victims.

His name was Rosario and he shopped for Gregory (who, much to Corinne's anger, trusted Rosario with his bank card), cooked for him (though Gregory had little appetite), and, most importantly, tried to teach him all the methods of rehabilitation taught to stroke victims. Though Gregory appeared to make little progress, Rosario never lost patience with him. Sometimes Rosario's girl friend, a professional manicurist, would come in and run a cassette on the VCR and watch with Gregory. He liked her company. She always smelled good, and she hummed a lot and talked back to the screen. ("Dat dere Meryl Street. Looka her. No blood. No notting. Why she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a star?") She particularly favored violence. ("Keel heem! Slit heez throat! Ahhh! Looka da blood!")

Then Corinne would arrive and spoil it all. Once she brought Elyse with her and the two of them talked as though he had also lost his sense of hearing.

Elyse: "A smart lawyer could help you get your hands on these pictures."

Corinne: "I have to be careful. His lawyer's a shrewdie. But Unk's money is running low. I've been checking out charity homes. He once had a flop play on Broadway and still belongs to the Dramatists Guild. They're affiliated with an actors' home out in New Jersey. Once I can get him into a place like that, I'll have control of everything he's got. I've found out what the Vickery, the Shahn, and the Cadmus are worth." She whispered her findings to Elyse. Gregory couldn't hear, but he didn't have to. He knew their value.

Moments later, Corinne was staring down at him while Elyse stood impatiently in the doorway. "I have to go now, Unk. I'm sure one of your spic friends will be looking in on you and help you get into bed. Elyse and I are invited to a cocktail party for Jacqueline Collins' new bestseller, *Goodbye Is Not Forever*. It's been bought for a miniseries to star Loni Anderson and Herve Villechaize."

I'm going to kill you, Corinne.

"Oh, I can't stand it when your eyes tear up, Unk—"

"Come on, Corinne, let's get moving," Elyse said from the door.

When they had gone, locking him in, Gregory went to work on the therapy Rosario had taught him with fresh determination.

Four weeks later, Corinne came to visit Gregory and found the door unlocked. As she pushed the door open, she realized the lock had been jimmied. Her heart pounded: Someone's broken in! Then her heart leapt: Maybe Unk's been murdered! She found Gregory lying on the bed, the wheelchair overturned, the drawers opened and ransacked. Not bothering with Gregory, she rushed to check the art work.

Finding nothing stolen, she cried, "Oh, God! Poor Unk! Are you all right?"

As she helped him off the bed into the wheelchair, he motioned for a pad and pencil and scribbled, "Police—wristwatch—cufflinks—cash."

Rosario arrived soon thereafter and said something in Spanish, hurriedly checking Gregory for bruises and for his pulse beat, while

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Corinne phoned for the police. A squad car pulled up in front of the tenement in record time, sending most of the neighborhood scurrying for cover.

Corinne explained to the two officers her uncle's incapacitation and showed them what he had scribbled. One of the policemen turned to Gregory and explained, "In cases like this, the perp is usually hard to trace, but we can try. I know this is difficult for you, Mr. Barlow, but why don't I ask questions that you can answer by nodding your head or shaking it yes or no, okay?"

Gregory nodded yes.

In fifteen minutes, the police knew the thief was white, in his early twenties, about six feet tall, and thin, that he had menaced Gregory with a knife, had slapped his face twice, and had come in through the front door, which Gregory had heard him jimmying but had been unable to do anything about. Also that he had taken sadistic delight in telling Gregory he'd be back.

"He comes back again I'll break his neck," said Rosario, while Gregory wondered by what stroke of luck Rosario would be in attendance if and when the thief struck again.

After the police and Rosario left, Corinne was talking aloud to herself. "This settles it! You've got to go into a home—it's too dangerous here! Stop making those awful noises, Unk. It's out of your hands and that's that. God, I can't even lock the door behind me this time. Oh, the hell with it! I've got to meet Woody and Mia at Elaine's and they hate it when I'm late!" She stormed out the door, slamming it behind her.

Oh, my niece—how I hate you. How I truly hate you.

The following Tuesday, Corinne came to see Gregory. "It's not easy getting you into this place, you know, Unk. There are so many ill, infirm, and needy actors—"

All starring in television series, thought Gregory.

"—waiting to get into the home. But by some pull, you're now number twelve on the waiting list. God willing, it'll only be a matter of a few months before I can lock you—get you into the place. And you'll be safe and looked after for the rest of your life. I've talked to your lawyer about being appointed your conservator and he seems to think *he* should be, but *my* lawyer says I'm in the favored position, being a blood relative. Why don't I wheel you into the kitchen and I'll make some tea." Gregory very much wanted to be wheeled into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the kitchen, but not for tea. "While the kettle's boiling, I'll just go into the living room and start an inventory of everything."

When Corinne heard the kettle whistling, she put her pad and pencil aside and got up from the sofa. She turned to walk to the kitchen and that was when Gregory plunged the steak knife into her heart. He adored the look of surprise on her face because he knew she adored surprises. Deciding to leave the knife in her heart because it would look more dramatic, he lowered her body to the floor and set about disarranging the room. He went to the kitchen to take the kettle off the fire, then to the bedroom to ransack the drawers. He carefully hid some worthless jewelry and cash Rosario had brought him the day before in the same place he had hidden the things when he had staged the earlier robbery.

What an actor I could have been! he exulted. From that first moment over a month ago when Rosario's therapy had begun to pay off, Gregory began to formulate Corinne's murder. It was his fingers that first came back to life. A few days later he could move the hand effortlessly. At the same time, his mouth started returning to normal. And, oh, that wonderful morning when his left leg returned to him and he was able to get out of bed unassisted!

But the masquerade was far from over. He settled onto the bed and twisted his body and mouth back into the shape of himself as a stroke victim. Soon Rosario would come. He would find the door ajar, fear the worst, and find it. There would be the police—probably photographers and newsmen as well because Corinne was a celebrated free-loader now, and also perhaps some mention of his being a novelist. With some of his titles thrown in, maybe there'd be fresh interest from some paperback house. He'd never been paperbacked, ever.

He remembered to strip off the gloves he'd worn for the murder and tucked them under the mattress, thinking about how much time to give himself before overcoming the symptoms of his stroke. Perhaps he'd begin in a few days with the partial return of his speech, then the use of his left hand, then the leg, and finally the mouth, and then—

And then Vernon. He'd see what he could do for Vernon.

His reverie was interrupted by Rosario's cry of horror from the doorway that opened onto the sitting room. He'd seen the dead Corinne. This is it, thought Gregory gleefully—it's show time!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SYLVIA PORTER'S PERSONAL FINANCIAL PLANNER DOES MORE THAN MANAGE YOUR MONEY

IT PLANS YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE TOO

Sylvia Porter, and the editors of Sylvia Porter's Personal Finance Magazine, now combine with all the computer tools you'll ever need to help manage your money on a day-to-day basis and plan your financial future, too. In Sylvia Porter's style, without complicated financial jargon or "computerese".

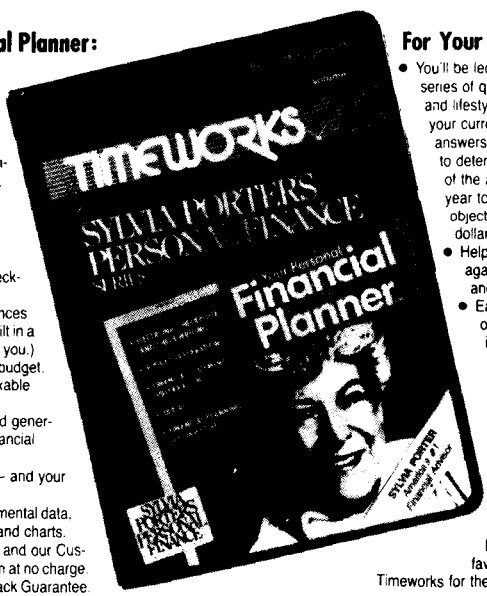
Volume I

Your Personal Financial Planner:

Helps you track your day-to-day financial data, then combines this information with your future financial objectives to produce the most comprehensive and easily-understood financial planning program available.

For Your Day-to-Day Affairs:

- Maintains your electronic checkbook and credit card system.
- Writes your checks and balances your checkbook. (We even built in a calculator and memo pad for you.)
- Prepares and monitors your budget.
- Classifies and tracks your taxable income and expenses.
- Calculates your net worth and generates customized personal financial statements.
- Tracks your financial assets – and your insurance policies.
- Graphically generates supplemental data, such as percentages, ratios and charts.
- You get our Toll-Free Hotline and our Customer Technical Support Team at no charge.
- You get Timeworks' Money Back Guarantee. (Details in each package.)



For Your Financial Future:

- You'll be led step-by-step through a series of questions regarding your life and lifestyle, your financial goals, and your current financial condition. Your answers will enable a computer to determine and print a summary of the amounts you must save each year to meet your financial objectives - in both real and inflated dollars.
- Helps you plan for protection against major medical adversities and other financial setbacks.
- Each program interfaces with others in this series. Your information can be incorporated into letters and reports produced by Timeworks' Word Writer.
- Everything is integrated. You need to enter data only once.

Available for Apple, IBM and Commodore computers.

Moderately Priced - from your favorite Dealer or contact Timeworks for the Dealer closest to you.

Next in this integrated series:
Your Personal Investment Manager

Other Timeworks Programs: The Evelyn Wood Dynamic Reader • Word Writer with Spell Checker • Data Manager 2 • SwiftCalc with Sideways • Business Systems • Swiftax • Cave of the Word Wizard • Wall Street

TIMEWORKS®

More power for your dollar.

TIMEWORKS, INC., 444 Lake Cook Rd., Deerfield, IL 60015, 312-948-9200

© 1984 Sylvia Porter's Personal Finance Magazine Co. & Timeworks, Inc. All rights reserved

From America's #1 Financial Adviser

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

BRENDAN DuBOIS

Randy Buell was stymied about the events of the night before. "It's a real mystery," he told Ashton. "What can you tell me about your neighbor? What kind of person was he? Where did he come from? We're investigating a crime here and we need some help . . ."

ROOM TO HIDE

by BRENDAN DuBOIS

After the troubles of the night, I spent most of the morning cleaning the house, limping from the the porch to the kitchen, mopping up as I went along. I got mad at myself for taking too many rest breaks, but there's not much you can do when the arthritis has set in as bad as mine has. When I'd cleaned up some and changed into a clean pair of khaki workpants and a white T-shirt, I made myself a lemonade-and-gin and went out to the porch swing on the front porch and waited.

From my porch, Hillside Lane is about twenty feet away. It rolls to the right, up Moore's Hill, and beyond the clump of trees at the crest is the house where Jake Turnell lived. Earlier this morning, before my porch and kitchen got cleaned, police cars had screamed up Hillside Lane to Jake's house, their sirens setting up a banshee wail that cut right through me. Now it was quiet, with a gentle whir of crickets in the tall grass around my porch. I hate cutting grass almost as much as any other chore, including sorting socks.

On the other side of the road the hill sloped down and away, and far off the sun gleamed off the surface of Tyler Harbor and the wide blue ribbon of the Atlantic farther away. My eyes have stiffened like my legs, but there was a time when I could have spotted my

© 1987 by Brendan DuBois.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lobster boat bobbing in the slow harbor swells. Time has taken care of that, along with other things. I swallowed some lemonade and set my legs up on the low table, my knees aching. Knees are the first to go when you've been lobstering, from bracing yourself against the rolling gunwale when you're hauling up the traps.

The glass was cool in my hands and I looked out over the harbor and daydreamed a bit about other oceans, other harbors, where the sun would set into warm blue waters. When I was almost done with my drink, a police cruiser, green and white, came down from the hill and rolled to a stop in front of the house. Even though it was a Tyler cruiser, I felt that old, familiar tingle of fear along my arms. A uniformed man stepped out, and when he got closer I saw it was Randy Buell and I felt kinda better. Randy's a good sort. He's a police sergeant, but I can remember when he got his first-class Boy Scout badge years ago when I was assistant scoutmaster of the town troop.

"Morning there, Ashton," he said, sitting down in one of the faded wicker rocking chairs I got scattered across the porch. He had his uniform hat in his hands—since it was July he was wearing his summer uniform—and his face and his left arm, the one that's always hanging outside the cruiser, was sunburnt. His black hair was matted with sweat and there were tension lines around his eyes.

"Randy." I nodded. "Offer you a lemonade? It's a hot day."

"That'd be nice," he said, and as I started to get up he held out his hand and said, "Hell, Ashton, I won't make you get up. I'll get it myself."

I must say that when Randy got up and went past me into the kitchen, I felt like the sun had started pumping out more heat. I was wondering how well I did cleaning the kitchen, with my eyes and all, but when he came back with a yellow-plastic glass of lemonade everything seemed all right.

"I'd offer you a gin and all 'cause it looks like you need one, Randy, but I know you're on duty," I said.

He took a long swallow from the glass and I saw the stubble on his face. "Christ, that was good," he said, wiping his face with his hand. "Yeah, we got a bad one up there, that's for sure, but it's more queer than anything you can imagine. You hear anything last night about two or three in the morning?"

"No, I can't say that I did, Randy," I said, looking away from him 'cause I don't like lying, especially to a good boy like Randy. "I sleep pretty well these nights, except when it gets too damn hot, but last

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

night all I heard was you boys screaming past the house. What went on?"

"Hell of a thing. Dispatch got a call about some shooting going on up at Drake's old house, and when we got to the scene there wasn't a soul around. But, Ashton, you should have seen the mess. Blood and guts and broken windows and bullet holes everywhere—looked like a goddamn war broke out. But the house was empty, nobody there. Rental agent said a fellow by the name of Jake Turnell rented the place, but we've been searching the woods all morning and we've come up blank. You see anything suspicious around—strange people, different cars?"

I scratched at my right ear, which is shaped kinda funny 'cause of some bar brawl I got caught up in over at Porter twenty years back, and I said, "No, Randy, I just puttered around the yard some yesterday afternoon and went to bed early. You got any idea what might've went on?"

Randy reached into his rear pocket, his leather gear and holster creaking in the process, and took out his notebook. He flipped through some of the pages. "The Iversons down by Watson's Lane said they saw a dark-colored car, maybe a Lincoln or a Buick, come roaring up here around two. Said it might have had New York plates. That jives with some other stuff we heard—that a couple of heavies were casing the town yesterday afternoon, looking for directions." He looked down again and flipped some more pages.

"They might've been looking for your neighbor," Randy continued, "maybe to settle an old score. But I can't figure out what happened. There's no strange car. Jake Turnell's car's still in his barn. The Iversons said they heard the shooting, too, but the car they saw go up the hill didn't come back down—and I don't have to tell you that Hillside peters out to a dirt path down near North Tyler."

"That's right," I said.

"It's a real mystery," he said, looking right at me. "What can you tell me about this Jake Turnell?"

I squirmed in the swing and tried to readjust my aching legs. It felt like someone was attacking both knees with a dull icepick. "What do you want to know?"

He gave me an odd look, like he was puzzled by something. "C'mon, Ashton, what kind of person was he, where did he come from, that sort of thing? We're investigating a crime here, and we need some help."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I rubbed at my jaw some, feeling the bristle, and I suddenly remembered that in all my rush this morning I forgot to shave.

"Well, all right then, Randy, I'll tell you, but I don't want none of this going into any official paperwork or report or something, 'cause you might not like what I'm going to say. But I will say that Jake Turnell was a good neighbor, even though we didn't hit it off quite so good at the start. I'll tell you what I know, just so long as you don't give me any grief."

Oh, I had him then, by God. He was leaning forward in his chair, a steady gaze on his face.

"You got it, Ashton," he said.

The first time I met Jake Turnell was in February two years back—toward the end of the month, when we had that nor'easter when the tide came in over the seawall and dropped three feet of water into the police station and the fire station and 'bout every business up and down Atlantic Avenue. I'd gone down to town to get some groceries and such, and as I was coming up Hillside Lane I saw this fancy sportscar off the side of the road, its nose buried in snow. This young pup was outside, trying to shovel away the front end with a piece of folded cardboard.

I pulled my pickup over behind the car and got out. Even though I had my good winter boots on, a wool coat and hat and thermals, that wind was blowing so hard off the harbor it was like razor blades lancing through me. And this kid didn't have no hat on, and his coat was some sort of plastic-and-leather slicker that prob'ly cost five or six hundred bucks in some boutique in Boston, but didn't hold the heat none. His gloves and boots were skimpy, too, and his face was as red as a boiled lobster. If he didn't get out of the cold pretty soon, he'd start getting that pasty grey that means frostbite.

"God, thanks for stopping," he said, dropping the piece of cardboard, which the wind snatched up and blew across the road. He put both hands in his pockets. "Can you help me shovel out?"

"I could," I told him, "but it wouldn't do any good. We could shovel here for hours and the wind'd just blow it back in."

"Damn it," he muttered. He had blond curly hair that was cut close and snow was frosting it and his eyebrows, and his nose was runny. "Are there any tow trucks in town?"

"Yep, but you won't get any right now. There's three drivers down there and they all plow for the town when the snow's bad enough. And it don't get any worse than this."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When he hears this, he hugs his arms tight against himself and starts cursing and stamping his feet like a three-year-old. I said, "Son, if you quit your bellyaching, I'll get you out of here in no time."

That stopped him. "Huh? Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "You didn't let me."

Well, I had my truck slipped into four-wheel, so I backed her around so we were bumper to bumper and I got a chain off my truck bed and hitched one end on my tow bar. When I looked back, he had the other end hooked onto his bumper—and a dumb grin on his red face.

"All set?" he asked.

"Sure," I said, "if you want to rip your bumper off and leave your car in the snow." After I reattached the chain to the frame of his car, I got back in the truck and eased it on out. It was no problem at all, 'specially since I had a load of concrete blocks in the bed, sitting over the rear axle.

When I got the chain out and back in the bed, he had his car started and I held out my hand and said, "Ashton Drew. Glad I could help you out."

And he just gave it a weak shake, said, "Thanks, Mr. Drew," and drove off without even telling me his name or nothing. Left me thinking some nasty thoughts there in the snow. I mean, I was set to invite the boy in for some coffee and warm him up some, but he just drove off without a by-your-leave.

Well, the second time I met him went even worse. That was getting onto spring, around March or so. By then I knew he was living in Fred Drake's house and I got his name, Jake Turnell, from Stan at Ocean Realty. How I happened to meet up with him the second time, well, maybe you'll understand why I don't want you to make a fuss or anything, Randy, because at that time things were tight. The electric company was making a moan about their overdue bills and things were closing in on me. Since food was the only thing I could cut back on, I took out my Remington 12-gauge pump and went hunting one Saturday morning. Of course, it wasn't deer season but I needed something to pull me through until the Social-Security check came, so I dressed and started out at daybreak. I headed straight for Paul Towsend's place out on North Tyler, where his orchards are, 'cause a lot of times you'll find deer there, pawing at the ground, looking for apples. But that morning I was skunked, so after a few hours I headed back. And the quickest way walking to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and from Paul Towsend's place is to cut through Fred Drake's old lot, where this Turnell fellow was living.

I was coming back across, cutting near the house, when by Fred's old woodshed I hear a loud click and a man's voice, saying, "Freeze."

I did just that and then slowly turned around, and there was Turnell, in a T-shirt and jeans and slippers, shivering in the cold, holding the goddamn biggest handgun I've ever seen in my life.

"What the hell's wrong with you?" I said.

Turnell's breath was fogging and his hair was matted down like he'd been sleeping. "Oh," he said. "You're Ashton, right? The man who towed me out last month."

The gun was still pointing at me and I was getting angrier and angrier, 'cause here he knew who I was and he still held it straight out in his hand. Even if he thought I was trespassing, I really wasn't, since I've cut through Fred Drake's land for years.

"That's right," I said, "Ashton Drew, your neighbor, and if you don't put that gun away I'm going to blow off your goddamn head."

Now, I know that sounds kinda harsh but, like I said, I was some mad by then and, besides, blood never bothered me that much. I pulled my time in France and I knew if I was pushed I'd have that shotgun up faster than he could spit. But his face got red and he dropped his gun hand down and said, "Sorry. I've been jumpy lately."

I didn't feel like going anywhere, so I stayed there, looking at him, until he said, "Would you like some coffee or something?" Now, I *was* going to tell him to stick it, but he looked so pathetic, shivering there in his underwear almost, that I took him up on it.

Inside was one of the strangest things I've seen in a long time. I mean, here was Fred's house, all three stories and fourteen rooms, and there wasn't a stick of furniture in it except for a kitchen table and two chairs. In another room there was a couple of suitcases and a rolled-out sleeping bag, and that was it. Turnell made me some of that decaf coffee, the stuff with no bite, and as we sat in that big kitchen I chatted him up some.

He said he was from Boston—even though I recalled his car had New York plates—and he said he was some sort of investment counselor and he'd decided to live up here for a while. Well, it just seemed too queer, Randy, with the gun on the table, drinking fake coffee inside an empty house, and I said, "Boy, who you running away from?"

Well, that made him sit up some, and I saw him glance at the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

handgun like maybe he made a mistake in not shooting me. He said, "What do you mean?"

"Jake," I told him, "you're about as jumpy as a coon in a tree, you got that gun and all, and I never seen any type of businessman who couldn't afford at least a couch."

He laughed then, but it was a forced one. "Stupid movers, Ashton, that's all. They say my furniture's held up someplace in Cambridge."

"Well, if you say so. But you've been renting up here near to two months and I don't think even the worst movers couldn't find their way up here in that time."

Then his eyes narrowed down a bit, like a cat ready to strike. "Pretty observant, aren't you?"

"Hell, that's your biggest mistake, if you're trying to hide in a small town. Everybody knows everybody else here and right now you're sticking out like the town drunk at a church picnic. It ain't just me—there's a lot of people in town who know who you are and where you're living."

"Great," he said, his voice almost a whisper, and maybe it was that hunted look on his face, but right then I took a little shining to him. Now, maybe I should have called you up right then, Randy, or even later, but he didn't look like he could do no harm. Anyways, I saw it as your business, Randy, if he got found or not.

"Listen," I said to him, "do you have money with you?"

When I mentioned money, his face snagged a bit, then he gave me a weak grin and said, "Money's no problem."

"Well, get yourself some furniture, boy. Electrical people, oil dealers, newspaper boys, they all come around, and they see someone living in an empty house it stands out, and stories get told and passed around, sometimes to the wrong people. You don't want to stand out, not here, 'cause there ain't enough room to hide.

"Next, keep your go-buggy in your barn—and if you can't do that, at least get New Hampshire plates on it. If people ask what you do, say you're a poet or a writer or something nutty like that, so if you stay up here alone a lot it stands to reason. Get rid of that phony stuff you've been wearing, there's some nice stores out in Porter sell what goes around here.

"Last of all," I said—and by then he was smiling some, and it was good to see him smile—"if someone asks you where you're from, don't tell 'em Boston or New York. People look on out-of-staters as odd ducks. Tell 'em you're from Manchester. It's the biggest city in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the state, and they may think you're kinda queer but it's better than admitting you're from Massachusetts or whatever."

He laughed at that and I could tell it was a genuine laugh. "Anything else?" he said.

By that time I had a bit of a grin, too. "Yep," I said. "If you ever get some groceries at Palmer's, for cripes sake don't say you're a Democrat. Old man Palmer will scream at you for an hour and then he'll toss you out."

Jake roared with laughter at that one, and said, "Why are you telling me this? I might be a murderer on the run, for all you know."

"You might be at that," I said, "but I've been around and I know people. I don't think you've done anything I should be scared of."

He laughed some more at that and we had some more coffee, and it was a right peaceful morning, just talking and watching the sun fill up the kitchen. Now, Randy, I can tell by the scowl on your face that you're not too impressed with what I was doing, but I really didn't think he was much of a threat. He looked too scared, for one thing. And for another, well, even when Fred Drake was alive he wasn't much of a neighbor, and I thought it would be nice to have someone personable living in that house. So I left it at that.

For the next few months we ran into each other more and more, waving at each other while driving by in Tyler or at the beach. One day I took him out on my lobster boat and pulled up a pot or two, then I pulled her into a cove for a lunch of cold beer and fresh lobster. One Sunday afternoon he came over, sure that his hot-water heater had bit the bed, but when I took a look down cellar I found it was just a blown fuse. While I was there, I saw he'd taken my advice and gotten some furniture. (He was now wearing plain jeans and polo shirts that didn't have one of those queer little animals on the chest.) That night I went over to see to his heater he invited me to stay for supper, and so of course I had to invite him over a couple of days later.

The night he was at my place—and I had to scrimp and save for a few days to come up with enough to buy a steak—he asked if I had some ketchup. Well, I thought I had some in the refrigerator but there weren't none there, and I started going through the kitchen cabinets. He got up to help me look—and after a while he said, "Ah, screw it, I don't need the ketchup."

He was quiet during the rest of the meal, then after I started to clean the dishes off he looked at me and said, "Things get tight sometimes?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By that time I was kinda feeling hot, and I said, "What do you think, smart boy? Social Security's barely enough to live on, not to mention the taxes I gotta pay here. Sure, I'm tight, but don't you worry about me none. There was a time when I had money to burn, but that's past me now, and I don't think it'll ever come back."

With that, he took out his wallet and eased something out, which he put under the placemat. "Don't get noble or anything, Ashton. Let's just consider this payment for services rendered. That advice you gave me that time meant a lot to me."

When he left, I didn't want to go near the placemat for a while, 'cause part of me was insulted that he would give me money and another part of me, well, I could use that money. So right before I went to bed, I lifted the placemat and my heart damn near stop when I saw the five bills there, each with a picture of old Ben Franklin on it, and I have to confess that I first hid 'em away, saying I'd give them back, but by Jesus the next day the oil bill came in and I started paying it and them all off. And every now and then Jake would slip me a couple of more when he was at my house and I wasn't looking. I really think he could afford it, Randy.

When I paused, Randy was giving me a real bemused look, like he wanted to get mad at me but he couldn't get the urge up—but his tension lines were still there around his eyes.

"Ashton, I'm surprised at you," he said. "A former member of the planning board, a good citizen in town, yet you've been aiding and abetting a person who's probably an escaped fugitive."

He shifted some in his seat and I looked over and damn near keeled over, 'cause his chair moved and on the porch boards I saw a crusty brown stain about the size of a half dollar. When I could speak, I said, "Maybe so, Randy, but he was always good to me and *I* don't think he did anything that bad."

"Oh? And why do you think that?"

I shook my glass, rattling the ice cubes some, and looked over the side of the hill, down toward Tyler Harbor. I'd seen that harbor snow-covered and sunlit over and over again for so many years. Now I was tired of the cold weather. I could use some warm weather, especially in my joints.

"Two weeks ago," I said, rocking in my swing, trying not to stare at the stain on the floor, "two weeks ago, I learned a lot."

On Monday two weeks ago, I'd gone up to Porter to see a movie,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something about World War II I wanted to see 'cause of my years in the service—but of course they had it all ass-backwards, with the actors wearing the wrong uniforms and carrying the wrong weapons. When I got home it was dark, and when I got through the kitchen door a voice said, "Don't touch the lights."

It took me about two seconds to recognize Jake's voice. "What's up?" I said as I closed the door. In the moonlight I could see him sitting at the kitchen table, that gun in his hand, and I smelled beer.

"Up? Everything's up, Ashton," he said, his voice slurring a bit.

I asked him how he'd got in.

"Part of my talent," he said.

I sat down across from him, wanting to see what he was going to do. For some reason, I didn't feel nervous. I didn't think the gun was there for me.

"Ashton," he said, "sometimes the run's so damn long you get real tired. You wonder if it's worth it. I sit up in that house all day long, with more money than you could ever spend, and what do I do with it? I buy food. I buy clothes. I buy the *Tyler Chronicle* every week and the *Union Leader* every day. They're out there, Ashton, there's a pack of wolves trying to trail me, and I know it, and that's the nut. If I flash my money and go places, my scent will be out and I'll be dead."

"Who's chasing you, Jake?" I said.

In the dim light, he shrugged his shoulders. "What does it matter? The government, the mob, big business. Sometimes they're all alike—their borders blur and you can't tell one from another. I was a bettor, Ashton. I bet that someone I was working with was going to get—promoted. And when they found parts of him scattered in the desert I knew I'd lost my bet, and I was losing time. The people who'd come out on top were going to clip any competition, and my name was on a list. I grabbed as much as I could as fast as I could and ended up here."

The air in the kitchen felt like the air just before a big thunderstorm breaks.

"Ashton," he said, "you begin to see things that aren't there. Remember the time you cut across my lot with the shotgun and I came out and almost shot you? I was convinced you were part of a hit team sent to take me out. Whenever the phone rings I jump out of my chair, ready to run. Today I saw a Cadillac cruising up and down the road and I almost snapped. I was afraid they were going to park

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at my house and take me out—which is why I'm here. I'm just tired of waiting."

By then the ice cubes in my glass had melted and the stain under Randy's chair looked like it had grown to the size of a dinner plate.

"And that's the last time I saw him, Randy. I offered him my spare bedroom upstairs to spend the night but he said no and left after a while."

The early-morning sun was shining stronger, and Randy, his face beginning to sweat, wrote a few things down in his notebook and shook his head.

"That's what probably happened last night," he said, closing his notebook. "From the blood and the bullet holes, it looks like an ambush. But I can't figure out where that car went to, or those two lugs, or your neighbor. I doubt his real name is Jake, but we got a state lab team coming over to dust for latents, so maybe we can find out a bit more about him." He looked at me.

"Don't frown at me, Randy Buell. I'm not sorry I didn't tell you anything before this, and I'm sorry if something happened to him. He was a good neighbor, a real good one. We minded each other's business and had some good times together."

"Hmm," Randy said, and as he stood up his hat fell to the floor. The sound when it struck seemed as loud as thunder. He bent over, and when I looked down his right heel was covering the stain and he picked up the hat with no incident.

"Thanks for your time, Ashton," he said. "Let me know if you think of anything that can help."

"That I will."

He turned and started off the porch, then he turned and said, "Oh, one thing I was wondering about. Where did you come up with that advice for Jake on how to blend in? It was perfect."

I shrugged my shoulders, wincing a bit from the pain in my right shoulder. There would be a heavy bruise there, I knew.

"Experience—what else? Besides, talk to your dad some. I'm not originally from Tyler, you should know that. I moved out here about forty years ago."

"Really? Where from?"

Manchester, a voice inside me urged. "A little town in Massachusetts," I said.

My heart rate didn't slow down to anything like normal until Randy got in the green-and-white cruiser and drove away. Just the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same, I gave him ten minutes before I got up from the swing and ambled into the kitchen. I got a wet towel and an abrasive and cleaned up the stain I missed on the porch, then I went to the living room, past the large, dusty couch and easy chairs and into my rear closet, where I took out my Remington 12-gauge. Even though I'd cleaned it again and again a couple of hours ago, there was still the sharp smell of cordite, and my shoulder winced again at the memory of the past morning.

Before going upstairs, I rested a bit, the shotgun loose in my hands. I was very tired, with not much chance for any real sleep for a while. "C'mon, old buck," I whispered, "let's finish it off," and I went upstairs, leaning on the bannister all the way.

In my spare bedroom, Jake Turnell was on his back on the bare mattress of the single bed. His face was as white as plaster. He was wearing blue shorts and a T-shirt and there was the large bandage on his right leg I'd put there that morning. He looked up when I came in and I reached over and untied the gag from his mouth. He looked set to move on me, but of course he couldn't, 'cause I'd tied his arms and legs to the bed with rope. He was glaring at me something awful and I sat down in a straight chair, the shotgun across my lap.

"Well," I said, "the police were here and I must say they're puzzled."

"Puzzled—that's a hell of a word. Mind telling me what's going on, Ashton? I woke up last night with two guys banging into my kitchen, and you right behind them. The next thing I knew there was shooting everywhere."

I kept both hands on my shotgun. "Simple, Jake. I'm just being neighborly. Last night a couple of fellas tried to get into your house to do some harm. I found that out and took care of them for you. If you don't believe me, they're both out back in my barn, in the trunk of their fancy car. My shoulder's still aching from it all.

"Let me tell you a quick story, Jake—a story about a boy around your age, who was growing up out West during the Depression, who was quick with a gun and who got his hands on some cash and then came East to go to ground. There was a time when my face was on the bulletin board of every post office west of the Mississippi. But of course time passes and people forget. But *you* never forget—no, sir—when you see a cruiser go by or when the phone rings late at night. You keep on hiding, even when the money's run out. That's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

why I took a shining to you so quick, Jake—that's why I helped you."

Jake tried to move and grimaced. "Tell me something, Ashton. What kind of weapons did those two have?"

"Handguns—.357s."

"My leg was hit with pellets. You shot me, Ashton."

"You got that right. You were running away from your house, Jake, and I didn't want you running far. You're my investment, my neighbor, and I was going to help you. That's why I made some phonecalls to a couple of people down Boston-ways and told 'em you were here. And when I learned two men were in Tyler looking for you—well, I got up by your house and waited for them. When they busted into your kitchen, I was right behind them and I hit them before they could hit you."

"Why the hell—"

"I'm getting too damn old, Jake—I want to go home to California before I get any older. I want sunshine and warm beaches, and I want you to come along and help me."

He tried to sit up, his face red. "What makes you think I would, old man?"

"Because you owe me. Those two were going to get you one of these days and I took care of them, right in your own back yard. I got you here and patched you up and cleaned up the mess you made on my floors. And I just spent the last hour lying to a good friend of mine on the police department, which doesn't set with me too well."

"I don't believe this! You set me up and shoot me, and now you want me to support you!"

"Wasn't much of a setup. If it was, you'd be lying in the county morgue instead of here. And all I have to do is to make one more phonecall and you can be there tonight, if you'd like. I protected you last night and I can protect you again, Jake—I got years of experience doing that here. But I want to go to California. Are you with me?"

He turned his face away for a few minutes and then turned back to me.

"What's going to keep me from dumping you the first free minute I get?"

"This, maybe." I prodded him with my shotgun. "Last night I hit your leg. A couple of inches can make a big difference. You can

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

think on that if you get the urge to screw me, Jake. But I don't think you will."

There was another long pause and he said in a low voice, "Why didn't you just kill me and steal the money?"

"First," I explained, "'cause I didn't know where you kept it. And second, well, you're my neighbor, Jake. I like you. Now, c'mon, we got packing to do."

With that, I got up, shotgun in hand, and went forward to untie him.

DETECTIVERSE

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

by MARY ANN GEORGE

Albert G. Metz couldn't stand cigarettes
And he hated the average smoker.
When his girl friend Grace
Blew smoke in his face,
He wildly attempted to choke her.

Her cigarette did rocket into Al's pocket,
Which set him afire with stealth.
Had he lived, he'd recite,
"I knew I was right—
Smoking's definitely bad for the health."

© *1987 by Mary Ann George.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Betsy found her birthday present on the kitchen table in a paper bag from the drugstore. Chocolate-covered cherries, maybe? Or even sweeter would have been the Little Missy Makeup Kit she knew the drugstore carried. The bag contained a dictionary, the sales receipt tucked inside as a bookmark where her daddy had blackly circled the word "improve" . . .

BETSY'S DICTIONARY

by BILLIE LEE POWERS

Picture Betsy at ten and pushing stickpin thin. See her short-cropped black hair, sparse and flat with no hint of the tapered fullness the hairdresser had promised Betsy's mother. Hunched on her knees in the middle of her bed, she traces a bony forefinger down the C's in her dictionary. Tears smudge her incongruously thick glasses as she squints at the word she seeks: culls n. something picked out as being inferior or worthless; poor fruit, stale vegetables, and animals not up to standard.

No eavesdropper, this Betsy. Her daddy had been shouting at her mother as Betsy passed by their not-quite-closed bedroom door. "Betsy's second-drawer all the way, Sarah," he'd said. "She's like *culls*. How could we have such an offspring? At thirteen, Jeff is brilliant. Lark is only eight and she performs circles around Betsy every day. I'm sick of Betsy, Sarah. She's a constant embarrassment."

Without waiting to hear, Betsy knew that her mother had defended her. Poor mom. She didn't even realize that she spoke in self-defense. *She* had produced this second-drawer vegetable and secretly wished she hadn't, Betsy would bet on that.

If only she were pretty like Lark, maybe her daddy wouldn't mind so much that she wasn't brilliant like Jeff. With Lark's honey-blonde

© 1987 by Billie Lee Powers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hair and unsquinty blue eyes, it must be very easy to fake a brain. Betsy had watched Lark do that time and again with their daddy, and that's how she knew that pretty girls are always smart enough to know that they'll never have to know much.

And there was the matter of presents. Pretty girls receive pretty presents. Her daddy had taught that lesson well. He had given Lark two cuddly pastel sweaters on her last birthday. The beautifully wrapped package was topped with a card, the pink-swirled message plain for all to see: "A Very Special Birthday Wish for My Very Special Daughter."

Two months later, Betsy found her birthday present on the kitchen table in a paper bag from the drugstore. Chocolate-covered cherries, maybe? Or even sweeter would have been the Little Missy Makeup Kit she knew the drugstore carried. The bag contained a dictionary, the sales receipt tucked inside as a bookmark where her daddy had blackly circled the word "improve."

She'd studied the book every night and then slept with it under her pillow, obsessed with the notion that definitions might magically sift into her brain at the witching-hour of midnight. Actually, her vocabulary was becoming quite monumental but she never verbalized her accomplishments. Now her secret plan had materialized into a superfantastic fact and she was ready to *show* this family something.

Daddy would be coming to her room soon. He would come to shout his latest embarrassment in her face. Betsy knew that her teacher had called him at work again. She had slipped away from school before last-period math, the sixth time in two weeks. But it didn't matter. Her daddy would be so thrilled with her documented excuse that he would forever forgive anything his wonderful Betsy might do. Her small frame quivered with the joy of it and her thin lips smiled.

She sat primly on the edge of her bed, anticipating her daddy's loud knock. She believed that she appeared striking, having learned that the word did not necessarily mean pretty, but simply very noticeable. Betsy considered her yellow turtle-appliqued sweatshirt to be the most outstanding thing she owned and she'd plastered twigs of her hair with setting-gel, striving for the pixie look she'd seen on a poster at the beauty salon. But the real attention-getter was held tightly in her hand. Daddy would surely hug her after he examined the big official-looking envelope with his name on the front.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The knock came and Betsy's voice took leave. Overcome with excitement, she couldn't call out for him to come in. Hurrying to open the door, she held the sweat-dampened envelope up and out in her hand. It was her passport to The Wonderful Land of Acceptance.

A nervous giggle escaped her as her father entered the room. So obviously her kin, he stood broomstick thin, squinting at Betsy through his thick glasses.

"I know why you're here, Daddy," Betsy managed. "I skipped class again today. But I did it for you. Just read this, *please,* before you say anything."

Ignoring the offered envelope, he shouted, "Betsy, what in the *world* have you done to your hair? You look like a *crow,* girl. Has your mother seen that mess? Whatever else you've done today, please tell me that you didn't go outside the house looking like that."

It was a bloodless wound, no broken bones—how could she hurt so much? Swallowing hard, she forced her eyes to meet her daddy's icy stare. "You hate me, don't you, Daddy?" she whispered. "You hate me because I'm not pretty like Lark."

"Watch your tongue, girl!" he shouted. "You're in enough trouble already. And leave Lark out of this. Lark was in *school* today. Where were *you?"* He shook his finger very close to her glasses and grabbed the envelope from her trembling hand. "What is this, anyway? It better be good, little girl."

Her wonderful surprise tarnished, she sat listlessly on the bed, not watching as he examined the long envelope. There was no way to make him love her.

"Betsy, did you open this? It's been resealed with tape. You know better than to open my mail. Why would you do such a thing?" Livid with rage, he came toward her. Betsy tumbled away, falling to the floor on the far side of the bed.

Scrambling to her feet, she begged, *"Please,* Daddy, just *read* it! It's a present for you. You'll like it, I know you will. It's something you always tell Mama you want more than anything in the world. I got it for you, Daddy. I got you what you've always wanted."

Her father tore open the envelope and yanked out the contents. He read it twice and examined the envelope again. "Betsy," he said, "What do you know about this?" His voice was hoarse almost to a whisper. "Is this a joke? What have you gotten me into?"

"It's no joke, Daddy. I entered a word contest and used your name. The rules said that contestants had to be twenty-one or over. I got your signature from a paper I found on your desk. I held it on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

window and traced it onto the contest paper. I won, Daddy! I won you a *million dollars!* I've been sneaking home from school to check the mail before Mama could see it. You'll have to fill out the personal stuff they want on that paper so they can make certain of your identity, and then they'll send you the money."

"You *forged* my signature onto something? You stupid, *stupid* little girl. This is some kind of scam, don't you know that? There's no telling what you've got me into." He headed angrily for Betsy again.

"*Daddy,* I thought you *wanted* to be rich! I thought you'd love me for it!" Betsy flattened herself against the wall, fear shivering her, and closed her eyes.

Why was he taking so long? He should have pounced by now. Cautiously, she opened her eyes and turned her head to look. He stood on the far side of the room reading the letter again. He didn't look angry any more. Though muddled, her brain surfaced a word from her dictionary. Daddy looked speculative.

"Betsy," he said, "where did you get the contest entry?"

"I tore it from a magazine at Harry's Hair when Mama took me there for this haircut. I *knew* I would win. From the very beginning, I knew I would win."

"Can you remember everything on that entry? What kind of puzzle was it, Betsy?"

"I made a copy of it at the machine at the mall. It's in my desk drawer—I'll get it for you." When she handed him the copy, she watched his face change as he read it. She guessed her daddy was experiencing avarice. He was obviously realizing the authenticity of the contest.

He cleared his throat. "You must never mention this to anyone, Betsy. Not your mother, not *anyone,* do you understand that? Just blank it out. As far as you're concerned, it never happened. I'll have to protect you, girl. Forgery is a major crime. They send people to prison for forgery. Don't *ever* forget that. Now, get that gook out of your hair and come down to dinner. I'll think of something to tell your mother about why you skipped school. Remember, Betsy, *not a word to anyone."*

Within two weeks after his good fortune was officially announced, Betsy's father had quit his job and boasted of his million-dollar-winning brilliance so often that he almost believed it himself. Racing about in his fancy new car, overseeing the construction of their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fancier new house, he gave no thanks to Betsy. He was too busy buying "this" for Lark and "that" for Jeff. Then a soft tap came on Betsy's door at eight o'clock one evening. Her mother had gone to a school-award banquet with Jeff and Betsy couldn't imagine who other than her mother would tap so discreetly. Without waiting for a response, her daddy entered the room.

"Betsy," he said, "I brought you some hot chocolate. You like it, don't you, girl?" He set the thick Mickey Mouse mug on the night stand.

"Thank you, Daddy," Betsy said. Marking her place in her dictionary with the sales receipt, she put it aside and peered at him. Was he intoxicated? She could smell no alcohol and he didn't appear "excited beyond self-control." But her daddy never served sweets to his middle child. Had he seen the error of his ways?

"Betsy, you haven't mentioned our secret to anyone, have you? I mean, up to this point, as of this moment, you haven't said a word to anyone, anywhere, anytime?"

"Of course I haven't, Daddy," Betsy said. So that was it. He had come only to remind her never to tell. But why would he bother with such a subterfuge?

"Well, that's good, Betsy," he said. "Anyway, I bought you that dictionary. Without it you wouldn't have become so interested in words. So theoretically I did win the contest. Drink your chocolate, girl, before it gets cold."

He left the bedroom, quietly closing the door.

Without bothering to knock, Betsy's daddy entered her bedroom a second time that evening. The soft nightlight revealed Betsy lying on her back, eyes closed, hands folded on her chest. Her glasses lay on the nightstand beside the empty mug. Very quietly, he walked to the bed and lightly placed a hand on her forehead. Her eyes flew open and he sprang back.

"Good Lord, girl, you startled me!" he stuttered. "I thought you were fast asleep. I just came to pick up the mug. You know how your mama hates for dishes to be left unrinsed. How long ago did you drink the chocolate? Was it still hot?"

"Oh, I didn't really feel like chocolate tonight, daddy," Betsy said. "I took it to Lark and told her you sent it up to her. She drank just past Mickey's tummy there." Betsy pointed to about three-fourths of the mug's depth. "I poured the bit that was left down the bathroom sink and rinsed the mug myself."

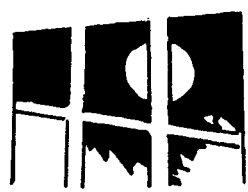
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Daddy looked *devastated* as he ran from her room. She could hear him in Lark's bedroom down the hall. Betsy had never heard him raise his voice to Lark before, but over and over he shouted, "Wake up, Lark! Oh please, baby, wake up—talk to Daddy!"

With a sudden little quirk of her eyebrows, Betsy was pixyish at last. Quizzical, slyly smug, she pondered. *Surely* her daddy had used an untraceable substance! Well, whatever—culls of a feather should stick together.

The mug sat inconspicuously amid the clutter on her desk. Betsy dumped some paper clips inside it and then hurried down the hall to Lark's bedroom. She must warn Daddy to stop that dreadful moaning before the neighbors heard. Later, she would teach him to modulate his voice, especially when he spoke to her. He would be very cooperative, Betsy would bet on that.

She had discovered a very interesting little word in her dictionary and her mind was aquiver with the power of it: **minor** n. a person under the legal age of responsibility.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kayo-chan took the lids off the two bowls on the board. One had black stones, the other white. "I guess you already know that the way to win the game is to enclose the most territory," he told his nephew. "Each point that is surrounded by your stones is worth one point. Any stones you capture, or kill, are worth double. The person with the most points wins. It's quite simple. At least the rules are. The strategies are quite complex. Go *was very popular with the shoguns, you know. Tokugawa thought it was wonderful practice for war."*

Jonathan Wood is thirty-one years old, majored in English at the University of Missouri, received his MA from San Francisco State University in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and has been doing just that in Tokyo for the past eight years. He is a 2-dan go *player and is convinced it's the greatest game in the world . . .*

THE EAR-REDDENING MOVE OF SHUSAKU

by JONATHAN WOOD

It was the last day of July, and although the rainy season was over the humidity was still high enough to make my clothes cling to me like a napkin to a wet table. The walk from the subway station, past the noodle shops and mah-jong parlors full of Waseda University students, had left me sweaty and sticky. I stood in front of the house, holding a plastic bag full of pears from a grocery by the station, wondering if this was really going to be worth it.

I had graduated from high school the previous March in Ishikawa Prefecture, up in snow country, and was now a student at Keio University, Waseda's arch-rival. I did wish my uncle lived a little

© 1987 by Jonathan Wood.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

farther away from my sworn enemies. Thinking about him made me stand up straighter. He had been a policeman and the few times I'd met him in the past had always made me a little nervous.

My watch beeped. Seven o'clock. I stepped forward, rang the bell, and opend the door to the *genkan*, or entrance hall. After calling hello, I started stepping out of my shoes.

There was a rustle of feet across *tatami*, then into slippers, and to the door inside the house. It slid open and I saw the back of my aunt's head as she bowed. "Please come in," she said.

"Thank you." I bowed. "I'm sorry to disturb you like this. Here's a small present." The formalities out of the way, I gave her the pears. It was the very beginning of the season, so they were expensive, but I wanted to make a good impression.

She finally looked up at me as she took them, and I was struck, as I always had been before, by her eyes. They were a very light brown, like her hair. Her skin was of a light complexion, though her cheeks had a healthy ruddiness to them. Her hair was tied back behind her head. My mother always called her brother and his wife my Tokyo aunt and uncle, and I suddenly realized that I didn't even know her name.

"My husband's been ready to see you for an hour," she said as I tried to remember the house I'd seen only once, nine years earlier. "But don't let him know I told you." We stopped outside sliding doors.

"*Anata*," she called, "Takashi's here!"

"Well, bring him in, for crying out loud."

She opened the doors. "*Doozo*. Have a good time."

I left my slippers in the hall and stepped onto the *tatami*, bowing less out of politeness than because I didn't want to hit my head on the doorframe.

My uncle was seated on the floor before a *go* board, a light blanket covering his legs. He was wearing a summer kimono and seemed much smaller than I remembered. A wall-mounted air-conditioner transformed the room into a miniature heaven. "Excuse me for intruding on you like this," I began.

"Don't be so stuffy. Come in and sit down before you hit your head on something. Your mom wasn't kidding when she said you'd grown. How's everyone back in Togi?"

"They're fine. I'll see them during Obon." He wasn't so small, I realized, as he seemed to have shrunk, maybe lost weight. There was a cane beside him. I knew he'd had trouble with his legs but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had managed to stay on the force until he reached the retirement age of fifty-seven last year. He was quite darkly complected, with tufty eyebrows and large eyes that gave him an owlish appearance.

"Well, let's get going. Kayo-chan says you're hit by the *go* bug. There are worse things that can happen." He took the lids off the two bowls on the board. One had black stones, the other white. "I guess you already know that the way to win the game is to enclose the most territory. Each point that is surrounded by your stones is worth one point. Any stones you capture, or kill, are worth double. The person with the most points wins. It's quite simple." He paused. "At least the rules are. The strategies are quite complex. *Go* was very popular with the *shoguns*, you know, beginning with Tokugawa. He thought it was wonderful practice for war. I think it's wonderful practice for life."

He began placing stones on the board with a loving precision. "I know you're just learning, but let me show you a famous game. It's better to start in the corners, where it's easiest to make territory, and then extend along the edges and finally to the center." He explained a few of the reasons behind this move or that, but I was soon lost.

"This game goes back about a hundred and thirty years, when the *shoguns* were still in power. There was a young man named Shusaku, and he was one of the greatest players who ever lived. I say young because he died at thirty-three from cholera. He was undefeated in nineteen castle games in the thirteen years he played in them—these were a series of games played once a year before the *shogun* by the best players in the country. Shusaku was a master. I studied his games. What a fine touch for the right move at the right time. What power." He stopped and resettled himself against the backrest. His eyes had a dreamy look, one I would see again.

"Yet it was when he was only seventeen that he played one of the most famous moves in the history of *go*. He was playing against Gennan Inseki, one of the strongest players of the day. They were about halfway through the game, and Inseki had the upper hand, at least according to the other professional players watching and discussing the game in another room. But an amateur, a doctor who was also there, wasn't so sure. He said the game was closer than they thought. They asked him why he felt that and he said it wasn't from looking at the board but from watching Inseki: when Shusaku had played a certain move, Inseki's ears had turned red, meaning he must have realized how powerful it was."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My uncle paused, sipping the wheat tea my aunt had brought us. "Well, the doctor was right. That one move helped Shusaku's stones and at the same time threatened Inseki's position in such a way that Shusaku was able to take the initiative and go on to win." He lifted a stone from the board with the forefinger and middle finger of his right hand and tapped the board with it a couple of times.

"When I was a young man, maybe a little older than you, something similar to that happened to me. Would you like to hear about it?"

"Of course," I answered. I wondered if it was going to be one of his cases. I hoped so.

As he started, I suddenly realized he really enjoyed telling stories. It reminded me of my dad's father and how lonely he was after he retired. Except for his married daughter, I was my uncle's only relative in Tokyo. He probably couldn't get out and visit people on his own. Now I understood why my mother had insisted on my learning *go*.

"This all happened in Setagaya," my uncle began, "a few years after the war. You weren't born then, so you don't know what it was like, but it was hell—the kind of place you never wanted to be in again. Anyway, I'd been sickly as a boy, and they said I wan't man enough to be a soldier. It didn't bother me—if the government said so, then it had to be right. That's how we all thought back then. I came to Tokyo from Togi to work in an airplane factory, then after the war was over they needed policemen badly, and I'd gotten a bit healthier, so I decided to give it a try. I liked Tokyo and I could make more money here than I could back home. Your mom was just a little girl, and our parents needed the extra money.

"So it was 'forty-seven or so. I had been a policeman for about a year. I was on duty at the police box with a guy named Osamu Kobayashi, who was my senior partner. He'd lost the thumb and forefinger of his left hand in the war, so we all called him O.K. You know—" He made a circle with his thumb and forefinger. "We learned it from the Americans. They didn't know we use the gesture to mean 'money.'

"It was summer, just about now, a real scorcher of a day. It was around four-thirty and I was feeling like that broiled fish I ate for lunch must have felt when they put him on the grill when this guy—his name was Furukawa—came charging up in a car and almost rammed a hole in the front wall. He was really hopping. He said he'd had a lot of money stolen and we'd better get over to his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

place right away. Kobayashi told me to go make sure nothing got touched while he reported it, so I jumped on my bike and barely managed to keep Furukawa in sight the couple of kilometers back to his house.

"Setagaya wasn't anything like it is now, of course, but it hadn't been hurt too badly by the bombs and fires—at least this area hadn't. Furukawa had a pretty nice-looking house, but even it didn't have indoor plumbing yet. He was a vice-president for one of the big trading companies, so that explained the house, as well as how he had a car and how he managed to have money to get stolen in the first place.

"I followed him inside. As I said, it was hot, and the windows were open and flies were buzzing around. Furukawa's face was so flushed I wondered if he'd been drinking. His wife was sitting by a low table in the main *tatami* room, fanning herself. She looked unhappy, but at least she wasn't hysterical like he was.

" 'Twenty-thousand yen!' he cried, waving his arms around. 'How could this happen?' Now that doesn't seem like much by today's standards, but back then it was a tidy little sum. I decided I'd better get some details to show Kobayashi I could do something by myself, and I got out my notebook.

" 'It was twenty-thousand yen?' I asked.

" 'Yes, yes,' he cried. 'It was our savings.'

" 'When did you learn it was gone?'

" 'Today—just now! Oh, I can't believe it!'

"I decided that his wife might be a little more coherent. 'How did you discover it was missing?' I asked her.

" 'We just returned from visiting my parents a few minutes ago and my husband found it was gone.' She spoke slowly, as if considering how much to say.

" 'No one was home?'

" 'No. Akiko-san, our maid, went with us.' And just then the maid came in—a young woman with a cup of tea for me on a tray.

" 'Please sit down,' said Mrs. Furukawa, though her tone made it sound as if she was speaking to her husband rather than to me.

I did. The maid was serving our tea so gracefully I couldn't help but watch her. She was beautiful, with soft white skin. She had that look you find in the descendants of the *samurai*—even features, a calm grace. But her movements were *too* controlled, and there was a hollowness in her eyes that spoke of a beaten animal. I was won-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dering why she was working there as a maid when Furukawa finally burst.

" 'I know who took it—I'm sure I know who took it!' he shouted. I looked at him in surprise, but not before, at the instant my eyes left her, I saw the maid cringe.

" 'You know?' I asked.

"He tried to look crafty. 'There's one other person who knew where that money was.' I glanced over at the maid and I saw an amazing thing: her ears were turning bright red. I expected the flush to extend to her face, but her cheeks only reddened slightly.

" 'It was Kawabata,' he announced, 'the gardener.'

"I asked him why he thought so.

" 'I'm sure he knew where it was hidden. I saw him looking in through the window this morning when I was checking it. Oh, why didn't I move it? I thought it would be all right for one day. I only needed it—' he broke for an instant '—I just can't believe I was so stupid!'

" 'How long have you employed this gardener?' I asked his wife.

" 'We hired him two weeks ago. He seemed trustworthy.' I was surprised by her calmness.

" 'Do you think he stole the money?'

" 'Well, the doors were locked, but the back window was open. I suppose he—or someone else—could have come in that way.'

"Kobayashi and the inspector arrived then, and told me to get back to the box. I gave them a rundown on what I had, though I made no mention of the maid. I'm not saying that was good police procedure, but I had decided it was time for a little personal investigation.

"It wasn't until the next afternoon that Kobayashi told me what else they had gotten. He said that Furukawa had kept the money in the hollow bottom of a wood carving he had made.

" 'That's a strange place for a vice-president of a trading company to keep his savings,' I said.

" 'Yes, the inspector thought it was strange, too, but Furukawa kept insisting it was their personal savings, whatever that means.'

" 'It sounds suspicious,' I insisted.

" 'You know something?' he said.

" 'No, what?'

" 'I don't think his wife knew he had that money.'

"A funny thought hit me. 'Or else she didn't mind that it was stolen.' I said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Kobayashi looked dubious. 'Anyway, Furukawa keeps saying Kawabata saw him checking the money yesterday morning before they left for Mrs. Furukawa's parents' house at eleven-thirty.

"I finally had to ask. 'Are there any other suspects?'

" 'Well, someone could have come in off the street, but the money was well hidden in that carving. And nothing else was disturbed. This thief knew exactly where the money was.'

"I swallowed. 'What about the maid?'

" 'I thought of that, too, of course, but it's unlikely. Mrs. Furukawa thinks the world of her. She comes from a very good family' He looked at the report. 'Her father was an officer—he, uh, "died honorably" on Guam. No choice, you know. So she lives with her mother, who grew up with Mrs. Furukawa. Her mother's been sick, so Akiko-san has been working at the Furukawas' to make money. Besides, she was with them the whole time they were out. No, it must be Kawabata, all right.'

"I was relieved. Something about her had touched me as I'd never been touched before. But her ears—

"The report on Kawabata came in a little later. He had gone back to his room earlier than usual, about two o'clock, then left around two-thirty, carrying a bag, according to his landlady. She said he had told her his father was ill and he was going home to Iwate for a few days to help out. The police there were notified to pick him up and send him back to Tokyo. That would take a couple of days, assuming he really did go there and not into hiding.

"I managed to get a look at the report and noticed Akiko-san lived fairly close to my dormitory near Ichigaya.

"I was off-duty that night, and after eating at the dorm I put on a shirt and pants—I was very Western then, you know—and rode my bicycle to her house. It was quite small, and dirty. I could see a kerosene lamp burning inside when I stood my bike in front of a rice shop about a hundred meters away. I hesitated there, trying to think exactly what it was that I wanted to say, when the lamp went out and the door opened. It was Akiko-san. She was turning my way when I jumped into the rice shop. To this day I don't know why I did that.

"I examined the rice prices with one eye and kept watch on the door with the other. The old lady running the shop was giving me a hard look and I was ready to get out of there when the girl passed by. I waited some more, then slipped out. She was about fifty meters ahead, wearing a formal dark-blue kimono and walking as fast as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it let her. I looked back at the dark house. Would she leave her mother alone at night? And why the formal kimono on a day like today? Where was she going now? I washed these around in my head while I followed her on foot, but they wouldn't come clean.

"It had cooled off, but the humidity remained high and my shirt was sticking to me. My legs started hurting, and then my feet. You couldn't find a decent pair of shoes anywhere back then. I followed her a few blocks east. She turned left on Kasumigaseki Dori, which the Americans had renamed Jackson Street. Some of the old charcoal-burning taxis chugged by, but she didn't take one. There was an American housing area near there and she was heading toward it. Did she have something to do with the Americans? I hoped not, because I knew I was powerless when they were involved.

"Then she turned right, away from the American section, toward Meiji Hospital. Things were starting to add up now. At the hospital, she went up the front steps and inside. I started to follow her, but thought better of it. I sat down by a grilled-chicken stand to wait.

"She came out about thirty minutes later. Her head was down and she walked slowly. Instead of going back to her house, she went east again, as though she were going the cross the bridge over the outer moat. I was thinking she had been to see her mother and the money was probably tied up in it, when suddenly she stumbled and almost fell down. Something was wrong. I started walking faster.

"We were on the bridge. That bridge had always struck me as a perfect symbol for the Americans—strong, shiny steel built to replace the one they had bombed. It was also a very popular place to commit suicide. Some people said the fact that it *was* American-made and showed our great dependence on them made it such a popular spot, but I didn't buy that. People just wanted a place away from home so their families wouldn't have to be the ones to find them. The government had had to ask the Americans to put up a fence that would stop the less determined, or the less athletic, but Akiko-san had slipped out of her sandals and, kimono and all, started climbing the fence.

" 'Aikiko-san! Wait!' I shouted. She stopped, frozen, hanging on the fence like a cicada shell on a *keyaki* tree, empty of life. Then she sagged back, falling. I caught her. Her face was lined with tears and I smelled the sweetness of her hair. Two MPs in a jeep stared at us as they went by, their white helmets becoming lighter, then darker as they passed under the street lights on the bridge.

"I led her back off the bridge to a bench in front of the hospital.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

" 'You've come to arrest me.' she said when she had recovered enough to speak. 'But I won't tell you anything.' It was the first time I had heard her speak and there was a toughness, a bitterness there that was far different from the sweetness I had imagined. It took me a moment to realize what she had said.

" 'No, you're wrong,' I said. 'I'm not here to arrest you.'

" 'Please,' she said, 'let me go. I'm finished. It's over.'

" 'What are you talking about?' I said. 'Tell me or I *will* arrest you.'

She looked surprised, but said nothing.

" 'All right,' I decided, 'let's go back to your house—we can talk there.' We started walking back. I had my arm around her shoulders to make sure she wouldn't fall, but other feelings coursed through me. I'll never forget that walk. Neither of us spoke, but I understood so much. It was as though a whole new world had been opened to me, the world of woman."

My uncle was looking in the direction of a scroll on the wall behind me. The two characters for "patience" were written on it in bold calligraphy. I waited, trying to make sense of what he had said, hoping he would continue. He seemed to ease himself back into the present and he half smiled when he saw me watching him so curiously.

"Well," he said softly, "it's getting late. You should be getting back, I guess."

"Wait," I said. "What happened next? What did she tell you? You haven't finished."

He half smiled again. "It's kind of disappointing, perhaps. I didn't do any detective work at all. She ended up telling me everything. She had taken the money, all right, not Kawabata."

"Why?" I asked. "For her mother? Why didn't she just borrow—"

"Yes, her mother needed an operation, but she was too proud to ask anyone to lend or give it to them—not even her mother's friend, Mrs. Furukawa. After all, she *was* descended from *samurai*. The girl was eighteen, she grew up during the war. She did what she had to do."

He paused. "It was easy enough to do. She knew where the money was hidden. Furukawa checked it so often that when she did the dusting she noticed the carving was always in a little different position. She took the money while Furukawa was getting the car that morning and his wife was in their bedroom, getting ready to go to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her parents'. The maid also knew Kawabata would be blamed for it because she knew he was going away."

"How did she know that?"

"He told Mrs. Furukawa, and she heard him tell her."

"But Mrs. Furukawa didn't tell the police."

"That's right, she didn't."

"It had something to do with the money?" I offered.

He nodded. "Mrs. Furukawa didn't know that money was there or what it was for. The maid did, or at least she had a pretty good idea after she found a note in one of Furukawa's suits she was taking to the cleaner's asking about money and signed, 'Nao-chan.' "

"Nao-chan was his mistress?"

"Right. Mrs. Furukawa didn't know about her until Furukawa went to get the police. The maid suggested she not tell the police about Kawabata's leaving in exchange for some information about what the money was really for. She knew we'd focus on him. Then she could pay for most of the necessary operation our wonderful doctors won't do without some cash up front. She was that desperate."

"But why did Furukawa report the money as being stolen if it would make his wife suspicious?" I asked.

"I guess he hoped she wouldn't figure out what it was for. And, well, you know about rich men and money."

"But why did the maid attempt suicide on the bridge?"

For the first time in my life I saw my uncle look as though something hurt him deep inside. "That was my fault," he said. "She was very sharp. When she passed the rice shop, she saw my bicycle—it was a police one, you see—and she knew no policeman would be buying rice then. Either he lived in a dorm or his wife would buy it."

"She knew you were following her."

"Yes, but she had to pay the money that night. Then she didn't know what to do. Her father was dead, her mother had been getting sicker throughout the war, there was never enough money, her life was a constant stream of apologies and promises to pay money she didn't have. Then she committed a crime and thought the police were on to her. She was ready for release."

He looked so sad that I couldn't help saying, "But you saved her, didn't you?"

"Yes, but it was terrible for her."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Where is she now, this Akiko-san? What happened to her? Did you arrest her?"

I saw his smile return. "Well, as soon as Kawabata was brought back with no trace of the money and Mrs. Furukawa 'remembered' him telling her that he was going to be gone, Furukawa dropped his complaint. Once Mrs. Furukawa learned what the maid did with the money and what her husband was going to do with it, he didn't have much choice—he said he must have misplaced it and apologized to us for causing so much trouble."

"So there weren't any charges after all," I mused.

"Dear," my uncle called out loudly, "Takashi's leaving now!"

I heard slippers in the hall. The door slid open and my aunt appeared. She bent down and helped him to his feet. "I hate my legs," he said. I rose to help him, but he waved me away. I followed them as they shuffled to the entrance hall.

She smiled back sympathetically at me. "You poor boy. Which story was he telling you? The one about the American soldier?"

"No, no, that happened later. I told him the one about the maid and the stolen money." He looked at her. "I'm sure I've told you about it."

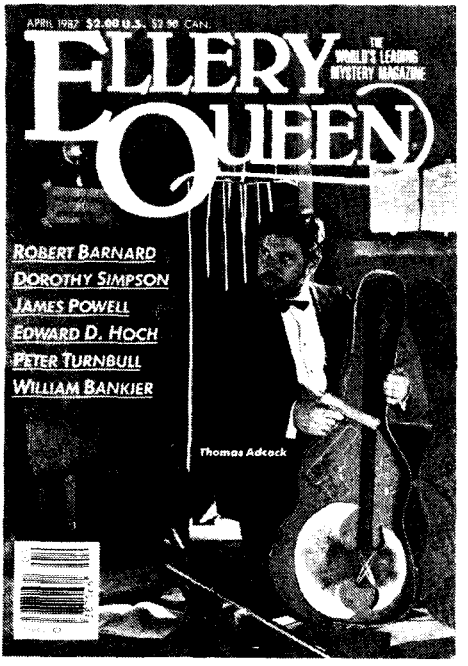
"Oh, of course," she said quickly and smiled at me again. "You must excuse him. He gets long-winded sometimes."

"No, I enjoyed it very much." I stepped into my shoes, then turned to say good night. I stopped, my mouth open, and found myself staring at her ears as she stood beside my uncle, smiling shyly.

He was beaming. "I trust I'll see you next week. You have a good deal to learn before you'll be a good *go* player."

"Yes, I'll be back," I said. "If you don't mind. —Good night." I bowed, turned, and made it outside. The droning of a cicada and the heat and humidity embraced me as I walked along, thinking how I was going to enjoy learning how to play .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



QUENCH YOUR THIRST FOR MYSTERY

SUBSCRIBE NOW AND SAVE UP TO 33% OFF THE COVER PRICE

CALL TOLL-FREE 1-800-247-2160

(Iowa residents Call 1-800-362-2860)

☐ Please send me 18 issues of ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE for only $23.97—I save 33% off the newsstand price.

☐ Please send me 12 issues for only $16.97—I save 29%.

Mail to: **Ellery Queen**
P.O. Box 1930
Marion, Ohio 43305

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

DQF7Q-7

☐ Payment Enclosed ☐ Bill Me

☐ Charge (Circle one) MasterCard VISA

Card# _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

OUTSIDE US & POSS., 12 FOR $19.97, 18 for $26.97 (CASH WITH ORDER US FUNDS). PLEASE ALLOW 6-8 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY OF YOUR FIRST ISSUE.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

JAMES POWELL

Brogan got to his feet. "Your Honor, it was real hand-to-mouth for me after I lost my magic wallet. So you can imagine how all the wingtip talk at the guild hall made me feel, what little inventory I had being ox-blood bluchers. I really did my quota of tossing and turning at night. That's how I came to hear those hammers tapping in the wee hours."

It constantly amazes us how James Powell is able to hold dark realities up to the light—and to lighten them. He eases our burdens uniquely and brilliantly, does Mr. Powell. He is one of God's brightest and sweetest children, is Mr. Powell . . .

WINGTIPS

by JAMES POWELL

Many years ago, during the reign of Secundus II, the court was astonished by the news that Noodle, the Royal Fool, and Gavel, the High Justice, were petitioning the King to be allowed to exchange their hereditary offices.

Secundus II smiled down at the two kneeling men and did not ask the reason for their extraordinary request. It was enough for the King that Noodle was the one who had given him the nickname "The Terrible Twos," by which, he rather suspected, history was going to remember him. It was enough that he was weary of the interfering old High Justice's talk of rights and precedents. So the King granted their wish, provided Gavel could show he could do a satisfactory stand-up routine in the Fool's ass's ears and coxcomb and Noodle could demonstrate from the judge's bench that he was master of the recently enacted Disenchantment Laws. Then the King

© 1987 by James Powell.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

uttered this cruel afterthought: "And of course you must each exchange the physical marks of your offices."

In his tenth year, like his High Justice father before him, Gavel had had his thumbs amputated, thus becoming a living symbol that the scales of justice must not be tampered with—and that the law was prompt and without thumb-twiddling, justice delayed being justice denied. Similarly, as the son of the Royal Fool, Noodle had, at the same age, been fitted out with a terrible back brace to twist his spine until eventually his right shoulder was level with the top of his head. After all, the thinking behind this went, what able-bodied man would choose to make his living by being funny? Under the King's terms, the thumbless High Justice must now have his old spine fitted into that same terrible brace while the humpbacked Fool must lose his thumbs.

The courtiers around the throne grew pale at this Royal pronouncement. But the High Justice and the Fool only bowed lower and thanked the King most sincerely. For Gavel had a son, the only child of his old age, a gentle, awkward beanpole with big ears and no head for the law—in fact, the boy's greatest gift was for blerumblorem, that happy burbling while running consecutive fingers over the lips. And Noodle had sired a young bookworm, who walked with a solemn, hidalgolike grace and listened like a dutiful little owl to the hoary stories that were to be his inheritance, blinking at all the punch lines. That year, on the King's Birthday, each child was due to receive the physical marks of a court office for which he was unsuited. This was why High Justice and Fool had made their petition before the King.

So these two men became a daily sight, walking arm-in-arm through the morning streets, Noodle peering around his hump to follow every word while the thumbless Gavel expounded on the Disenchantment Laws. When the idea of free enterprise came to Secundus II in a dream, he saw at once that it could not coexist with magic or sorcery. If a man in evening dress could make a pass over a five-and-dime walking stick and, abracadabra, change it into a dozen expensive long-stemmed roses, he would certainly drive every legitimate florist to the wall. And what entrepreneur would bother to accumulate the vast amounts of capital to industrialize the kingdom if at any moment some testy old grump with bushy eyebrows and a conical hat could luck onto the way to transmute lead into gold?

This was why the first of the Disenchantment Laws banished all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

magicians and sorcerers to the wilderness beyond the city walls. It should be said that the magicians lost much support from the animal-loving public when they resisted their expulsion by pelting the police with live rabbits from their inexhaustible top hats. The departure of the sorcerers, muttering threats and pushing their alchemical equipment ahead of them on handcarts, was followed by a month-long rain of toads and frogs, which left the chimney storks too fat to make deliveries and the city population declined alarmingly. But as the drinking buddies the King called his Royal Advisors predicted, once the old geezers settled into the caves and ruined towers and cracked the books again, they quickly forgot the city and the amphibian downpour ceased.

Among the other new laws were the Abolition of Charms and Spells Act which forbad voodoo dolls and the like and required the plowing under of a vast acreage of four-leaf clovers, the Controlled Substances Act which confiscated all magical devices, the Little Man Act outlawing the employment of elf labor, and the Individual Initiative Promotion Act which ordered the filling in of all wishing wells. Persons found guilty under these laws were banished from the kingdom and their wealth was divided between the Crown and their accuser. These enactments were Noodle's introduction to the law.

Then, in the midafternoon shade on the battlement promenade near the Forest Gate, the Fool would read to Gavel from his file of jests and humorous stories to improve the Royal digestion, or if they were alone he would instruct the man in that comical fall named after Keaton's bighorn prat which affects a momentary collapse so total that any pursuer must stop in its tracks, helpless with laughter. And the Fool practiced solemnity, sitting across from the High Justice for long minutes without mugging, rolling his eyes, or doing the ear-wag. This last gesture, of the Fool's own invention, involved sticking the thumbs in the ears and waggling the fingers. It never failed to provoke mirth at court, particularly when aimed in the King's direction with the Royal back turned. Of course, it made him sad to think that he would soon be thumbless and the ear-wag, his only real contribution to jesting, lost forever. But, ah, what a fine High Justice his son would make!

Sometimes when they were up there on the wall, a magician in tattered evening dress with a saw under his arm and pushing a coffinlike box on a gurney would sneak from the edge of the trees followed by his "beautiful wife-assistant," a surly blonde in a two-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

piece spangled outfit that showed her scarred midriff. But before they could get into their act, the archers in the tower would run them off with a hail of arrows. Afterward the Fool once said, "I used to go to a diner that had a magician counterman. How fresh those eggs tasted, the ones he pulled out of my ear."

"Tell that to your honest poultry farmer," answered Gavel. "No, the magicians had to go. And the sorcerers, too. Big outfits like Mumbo Jumbo Pharmaceuticals weren't going to shell out big bucks for r-and-r into the health-giving properties of elephant toenails when tomorrow some old codger poring over an ancient volume of forgotten lore might come up with the formula for the elixir of life." But even as he spoke, the High Justice stared hard at the spot in the bushes where the magician had vanished like someone trying to bring back the good old days.

It was the very eve of the Royal birthday before the High Justice and the Fool judged each other ready to demonstrate what they had learned.

Gavel went first, stepping into the spotlight wearing Noodle's ass's ears and coxcomb right after the King's morning briefing on the news and weather. The carefully crafted turn began with a vintage mother-in-law joke before moving on to the one about the stuttering drawbridge operator and the moat alligator. Next came a passable pratfall and a stunning triple double-take.

"May it please Your Majesty to stop me if you've heard this one," concluded the High Justice. "Sinbad, that famous traveler of old, once sailed so close to the Magnetic Island that all the nails were plucked from his ship, which foundered forthwith. Sinbad himself drifted out to sea, where he lived thirty days on a loaf of bread." As rehearsed, Gavel did a count of three before adding, "Of course, he nearly fell off once or twice." Then, in keeping with jesting's oldest tradition, when they were laughing he left them.

Declaring himself mightily pleased, the King donned the false nose with attached moustache, eyeglasses, and eyebrows he wore outside the palace so he could pass summary justice on any of his people who spoke against him and hurried Gavel and the Fool off to the Hall of Laws.

As Noodle mounted the judge's bench wearing the High Justice's fur-trimmed robe and square hat of office, the Chief of the Magic Police entered with a measured and self-important tread, herding two men and a woman ahead of him with one hand while in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other he grasped the scruff of the neck of a pug-nosed old man who reeked of leather. While the police chief arranged his witnesses in their proper order on the witness bench, Noodle practiced solemnity and let his gaze wander to the spectators' gallery. That tall new arrival looked vaguely familiar. He stared up at the man until the clerk rose to announce that the case before the court was the Crown versus Brogan the Shoemaker, who was accused under the Little Man Act. Noodle was pleased. He had no quarrel with the outlawing of elf labor. An elf would work all night for a basin of milk with a pat of butter floating in it. How could a man with a family to support compete with that?

In his best judicial tone, Noodle asked, "How does the accused plead?"

When the shoemaker had croaked, "Not guilty, Your Honor," the police chief released his grip and let the man drop onto a waiting stool.

Before the Fool could signal for the testimony to begin, the bailiff approached the bench with a note. The message read: "Gentry W. Pupp can provide valuable information in this case." It was signed, "A Friend." Asked to point out the sender, the bailiff turned to the spectators' gallery. Then he shook his head. "The guy was there a minute ago, Your Honor," he insisted.

The man Noodle thought he'd recognized wasn't there, either. He frowned. "Let's have Mr. Pupp join our little proceedings," he told the bailiff.

At a sign from the bench, the police chief took two steps forward and bowed warily, bothered by the hump and the presence of thumbs. But then he recognized Secundus II behind his disguise in the V.I.P. seats with the High Justice in ass's ears and coxcomb at his side and knew whatever was happening was the King's will. "Your Honor," he began, "this morning I responded to a complaint from Granny's Excavation Service, which is digging out a wishing well at Foxglove and Primrose, the owners being in possession of a valid permit to convert said well into a bottled mineral-water operation." (Noodle shuddered, imagining the coppery taste of wishing-well mineral water.)

"According to Granny's, somebody'd put a spell on the excavation site," continued the police chief. "One day they'd clear out half the debris, and when they came back the next the well would be filled up again. A former denizen of the shadow world of magic lives nearby. Figuring he'd know about any spells working locally, I paid

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him a visit." The police chief crooked his finger at the first person on the witness bench.

The slight, sallow-faced man rose, clutching a paper parcel to his chest. His face joined a ferret's eyes with the fearful mouth of the rabbit it was stalking. "My name's Tomtom, Judge," he announced in a reedy voice. "My father, who was a musician, called me that because he hoped I'd grow up to play kettledrum in the family band. But I was a wild youth and ended up in jail for stealing livestock and attempted flight to avoid prosecution. There they taught me the tailor's trade as part of my rehabilitation. But when I got out I strayed into the shameless occupation of magicians' outfitter, tailoring evening clothes with all those ingenious little pockets and sewing the sequined tights for their assistants. I learned the business inside out."

Here the High Justice jumped to his feet with a waggish look. "The guy learned the seamy side of the tailor's craft!" he shouted.

Noodle went pale. In all the haste of preparation he had forgotten to warn Gavel that people like the King abominated puns above all else. Actually, he hadn't forgotten—he simply hadn't thought the High Justice up to punning yet, it being, after all, rather at the mystical end of jesting. Fortunately for them and their sons, the King was dozing in his nose mask. He woke with a start without catching what had been said.

"Tomtom here turned six patterns of plaid when he saw me at his door," continued the police chief, "but he looked so relieved when I hit him with the spell business that I believed his protestations of innocence. So why were his eyes chasing all over the room to avoid mine? And why did they always skip the space under his bed? Well, I investigated. He's holding what I found."

At a nod from the Fool, Tomtom undid the parcel he had clutched to his chest. Inside were three tiny suits of green moleskin and three red caps, each with a white owl's feather. The courtroom gasped, recognizing the traditional bonus given to elves at the end of their work stint. Tomtom's pride overcame his fear and he held up a jacket. "Note the natural shoulders and the English nip at the waist, Judge. Why can't short people have style, too?"

The police chief said, "Tomtom here admitted he'd made these outfits for Brogan the Shoemaker, whose shop is on Primrose just south of Foxglove. I hurried right over. Today that block of Primrose is mostly empty buildings and boarded-up storefronts. But many of us recall when it was a hotbed of that magical element our King so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wisely rid us of with the Disenchantment Laws. Outfits like the Fairy Godmothers' Bund Meeting Hall, Pumpkin City, the coach-and-carriage rental people, and Chez Rumpelstiltskin, which ran afoul of the Defense of the Lamé Industry Act prohibiting the spinning of straw into gold, had to close their doors right off the bat. And other legitimate operations like Smartie Pants, that outfit that had developed this dandy process for making jeans out of nettles, folded when the customer traffic fell off. Today all that's left on the block is Mr. Brogan's shop and the Tent and Awning Factory Outlet next door.

"Brogan's place had a Sale sign in the window. Stepping inside, I found the accused behind a counter displaying his wares. Pretending to examine a pair of shoes, I gave the tiny shop the once-over. Three basins such as one might use to serve milk with a pat of butter in were stacked up by the basement door. That told me pretty much what I wanted to know. I left the shop to call for the patrol wagon, telling the old guy that wingtips weren't quite my style. That's when I noticed this here gentleman standing in a doorway across the street writing in a notebook."

The next witness rose. He had the bland mouth and moustache of a minor functionaire. But his nose had been broken more than once and the dark suit he wore gave him a cocky air. The jacket buttoned much farther over to the right than was currently fashionable and the material had small white lines running through it vertically.

"Rosco Shamus, private investigator, Your Honor," he said. The Shoemakers' Guild contracts out all their inspections to me, you know, to keep everybody toeing the line on prices and standards. And while we're on the subject, let me say I think the chief here should have bought those shoes. Wingtips are the coming thing and Brogan's probably got the only supply in town. Listen, ten days ago a caravan from the capital two kingdoms over arrived with the news that wingtips were one hot item there and heading this way fast. It made quite a stir at the Shoemakers' Guild.

"But to get back to the matter at hand, I've had Brogan's shop under surveillance for three days now. Something fishy's going on there, that's for sure. In his prime, which Brogan ain't, a shoemaker can crank out maybe four pairs of shoes in a twelve-hour day. Well, from what I've seen and what I've learned from asking around, this guy's been selling a dozen pairs of wingtips a day for like a week now—and waiting on customers at the same time."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"So you think we're talking elves here, Mr. Shamus?" asked the Fool.

"I hate to finger the old guy, but it sure looks bad, Your Honor."

As the private investigator took his seat, a portly, red-faced man wearing a substantial gold watch-chain was following a bailiff into the courtroom. The newcomer carried his stomach proudly before him as if it were his favorite child and patted it affectionately before sitting down on the witness bench. This, Noodle decided, must be Mr. Pupp, whose turn to speak would come in due course. He turned to the police chief. "This all looks pretty circumstantial," he said. "Did anyone actually see elves?"

The female witness, a bony woman, all elbows, knees, and shoulders, rose. "I'm the Widow Parker, Your Honor," she said, fluffing her thin, carroty hair. "I live on the third floor of the house next door to the shoemaker's shop. Of an evening I like to sit in the dark by the open window with my thoughts and my tea, the cup that cheers but does not inebriate, though I always keep the brandy bottle handy to make up for that deficiency. Mostly I think about the good old days, by which I mean back before I met the late Mr. Parker.

"Anyway, a week or so ago, right after Mr. Brogan blew out his bedroom candle, I was sitting there when I heard a heavy-footed man in the alley between the shop and my house. Next came this scurry-scurry-scurry of little feet. Oh oh, I said to myself, now we've got elves. There goes the neighborhood! And it's been that way every night since—heavy footsteps and scurry-scurry-scurry. Then after a little bit, heavy footsteps coming back alone. A few minutes later comes the tap-tap-tap of little hammers.

"And the cats, don't forget them. Those elves brought a plague of yowling cats with them. Whenever I turned in, I heard that tap and yowl all the way to the Land of Nod. But last night I got a brainstorm. Widow Parker, I said to myself, if you're ever going to see an elf, now's your chance. So come the scurry-scurry-scurry I stuck my head out the window. But the angle was bad and the moon ducked behind a cloud. What I'm trying to say is I only got a glimpse of the last one. A biggish elf, I'd have to call him."

"Or a shortish person?" suggested Noodle.

" 'Squattish' might be the word. Actually, going away he kind of reminded me of Mr. Green, who used to run Frock Prince, the exclusive dress shop below me on the ground floor." Widow Parker shook her head. "It was terrible what the court did to him just because he liked a smooch now and then."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The police chief interrupted. "Your Honor, one of my assistants handled that particular case. As I recall, Mr. Green, having been found guilty of impersonating bewitchment to obtain romantic favors, had his goods confiscated and was banished from the kingdom."

Dismissing the Widow Parker, Noodle signaled the man with the gold watch-chain to rise and asked if he possessed any information relevant to the case before the court.

"What can I tell you, Your Honor?" he said. "My name is Gentry W. Pupp, owner of Pupp's Tent and Awning Factory Outlet, manufacturers of Pupp's Patented Army Small Tent. Our motto: 'A Dry Soldier Is a Do-or-Die Soldier.' " He gave his stomach a congratulatory pat.

"Mr. Brogan is my tenant and my neighbor. I live above the factory outlet right next to his shop. The Widow Parker there lives on the other side. She's also my tenant. For what it's worth, I own the whole damn block. Mr. Brogan and I also had some dealings on a matter of investments, much to my shame and his regret. A couple of years back he sought my advice on how to invest the two thousand gold pieces that were his life's savings to secure his old age. I suggested he buy a magic wallet by way of an annuity—you know, the kind where once a day he'd find a gold piece inside. In five and a half years, he'd recoup his investment and keep on getting that daily gold piece for the rest of his life. Well, six months after he bought the magic wallet it was confiscated under the Disenchantment Laws. Heaven knows who's collecting those gold pieces now." (Here there came the sound of someone snorting with amusement into a nose mask.)

"Of course, those same laws did me dirt, too," continued Mr. Pupp. "It was like all my tenants went belly-up except for Mr. Brogan here, and now *he* stands accused."

"Mr. Pupp, did you ever see or hear elves in the vicinity of Mr. Brogan's shop?"

"I did not, Your Honor."

"That makes me wonder why you're here."

"I was wondering that, too, Your Honor."

Motioning the man to sit down, the Fool said, "Now let's hear the accused's side of the story."

Brogan got to his feet. "Your Honor, it was real hand-to-mouth for me after I lost my magic wallet. So you can imagine how all the wingtip talk at the guild hall made me feel, what little inventory I had being ox-blood bluchers. I really did my quota of tossing and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turning at night. That's how I came to hear those hammers tapping in the wee hours.

"Now, shoemakers believe that among the little people lives a tribe of elfin colleagues ready to serve any of us they take a fancy to with awl, wax, and thread for a cobbler's fortnight, which is to say a period of ten days. But elves are reclusive folk and will not be spied upon. So I resisted the temptation to sneak downstairs for a peek. Well, the next morning waiting for me there on the counter were a dozen pair of bright new shoes. And my silent prayers had been answered, Your Honor—those shoes were wingtips!"

"Is the court to understand you are changing your plea to guilty, Mr. Brogan?"

"Oh, no, Your Honor. I didn't employ those elves. Those elves came uninvited."

"And stayed because you fed them."

"Is hospitality such a crime?"

"And the little suits were going-away presents?"

"That was certainly the spirit in which I intended them, Your Honor."

Motioning the man back to his seat, Noodle sat touching his ten fingertips together as Gavel had taught him to do to indicate he was weighing the evidence. Then and there, he could very well have pronounced the man guilty. But such a judgment wouldn't enrich the King's coffers by a penny. And besides, there were still some puzzling questions unanswered. "Mr. Shamus," he said, "was this a regular inspection tour when you staked out Mr. Brogan's shop?"

Taking a paper from his pocket notebook, the private investigator passed it up to the bench. "Actually, the Guild got this anonymous note, Your Honor."

The Fool read the note aloud: " 'How long will you people go on tolerating a bad apple like Brogan in your barrel?' " It was signed "A Concerned Ratepayer." Neither paper nor handwriting matched the one from the spectators' gallery. Now what?

"Actually, I don't make regular inspections, Your Honor," continued Shamus. "I just do spot checks."

"Spot Chex?" cried the High Justice from the V.I.P. seats. "That sounds like a breakfast food for dogs!"

"The court will adjourn until after lunch," announced Noodle quickly, hoping to distract the King from the pun. "At that time I will pronounce judgment. The witnesses are ordered to return in an hour. The accused will remain in custody." But his trick hadn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

worked. Secundus II had backed Gavel up against the wall and was shaking a Royal finger under his nose.

Leading Brogan from the emptying courtroom by the scruff of the neck, the police chief paused by the judge's bench to say, "Your Honor, for what she's worth, last year I got one of those same 'Concerned Ratepayer' notes, claiming the Wright Brothers, the new-and-used carpet dealers on that same block of Primrose, were selling magic carpets. You know, flyers. And we did turn up one on the premises. They claimed some guy with a red beard sold it to them in a batch of used carpets. They claimed they didn't know it was magic. 'Don't make me laugh,' said the judge, ordering the Wright Brothers exiled and their wealth confiscated."

Gavel had taught Noodle to raise an eyebrow instead whenever he got the urge to smile. Noodle raised an eyebrow. Several years ago, back before the Disenchantment Laws, his wife had inherited one of those narrow-staircase magic carpets from a great aunt. Nothing fancy like a flyer, just a runner. The Wright Brother they'd sold it to—Noodle could never keep their names straight—was the same man who'd been in the spectators' gallery. But the Wright Brothers were under banishment. Well, so was Mr. Green of Frock Prince—that hadn't stopped the Widow Parker from seeing him bringing up the rear with the elves.

"Chief, I'd like to see the file on the Green case," said the Fool. "And, oh, Shoemaker, those nifty tan-and-white wingtips Mr. Pupp was wearing, were they from your shop?"

Shaking his head as best he could, Brogan croaked, "The elf cobbler motto is 'Any color so long as it's black.' "

The air in the overgrown courtyard of the Hall of Laws was weighted with honeysuckle. As the Fool and the High Justice paced the path together, Gavel said, "Oh, yes, I understand. The King made it quite clear. One more pun out of me and our exchange of offices is off. One more pun and our sons will live the wrong lives. But it's not that easy. Once encountered, those glorious flowers on the lawn of thought spring to the tip of the tongue. How can I swallow them?"

"I didn't mean swallow your puns forever," said the Fool. "No, each swallowed pun callouses the soul. That's half of mankind's problem. That's what gives kings, bureaucrats, and receptionists their bullying ways. Their parents never sat them down and explained that puns are the only thing that distinguishes man from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the other talking creatures like the parrot and the jackdaw. So childhood for them was a dark and fearful time. Timid, unsure of themselves, they choked back every pun. That's why they're the way they are today."

"So what am I supposed to do?"

"Save up a day's puns until you get home," said Noodle. "Then stand in the fireplace ashes with your head up the chimney and shout them all out at the top of your lungs. That's what I do. On a lucky day we'll raise the ghosts of the puns our ancestors shouted up those same chimneys and hear the voices of our descendants shouting puns that are yet to be. Then our spirits will soar up and for a few brief moments we will become the point where past and present meet."

"You've soared up the chimney?"

Noodle cocked an eyebrow. "I flue," he admitted. Then he said, "Never forget that we are not alone, you and I. Watch the street life carefully. Notice the old gentleman with chimney soot on his ears, the beauty with the smudge on her nose. These are your brothers and sisters striding by with a quick step and a pun in their hearts. But make no sign to them. For one day soon, men like Secundus II will seek us out and try to destroy us. They've outlawed magic. Can puns be far behind? First will come the Roof Police listening down the chimneys. Then it'll be compulsory central heating to flush us out into the open."

The Fool put a finger to his lips, for the Chief of the Magic Police was coming down the path with a packet tied in red tape. Noodle cleared his throat in fine judicial style, accepted Green's file, and motioned the police chief to fall in step with them. As he expected, he found an accusatory note signed "A Concerned Ratepayer" among the papers. It had been written to the socially prominent mother of one of the women Green was courting and declared that the squattish Don Juan was neither of noble birth nor under a witch's spell. When the case hit the papers, other women, angry to learn of Green's unfaithfulness, had provided the prosecution with more love letters. Noodle skimmed through them and then summed up certain pertinent passages out loud. "Granted he speaks of being 'bewitched' and 'enchanted,' and in one place even says he would count himself a prince among men if he possessed the heart of the woman in question, but isn't this merely the jargon of love?"

The police chief shrugged. "Like I said, I didn't handle the case."

"The courts were swamped right after the Disenchantment Laws,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

admitted Gavel. "Certain individuals might have received less than a fair trial."

"And doesn't anyone find it strange that the notes were anonymous?" asked the Fool. "I mean, by not naming himself, wasn't the accuser forfeiting half the convicted person's wealth? I'll grant you, Brogan was a poor man, but the Wright Brothers ran the largest rug dealership in the city and Frock Prince was a thriving concern. And what about the fact that all three establishments were on the same block of Primrose?"

Here a bell rang to reconvene the court. As they headed back up the path, the police chief asked, "Is that why you think the notes were anonymous—so people wouldn't ask themselves why this landlord kept denouncing his tenants?"

Pupp was not among the returning witnesses. Noodle scanned the courtroom from the judge's bench. He was about to send a bailiff after the man when a commotion broke out in the entranceway. A moment later, Pupp tottered in, his skin the skulk white of things that flee the light of day. Supporting himself on the courtroom doorjamb he gasped, "I've been robbed! They got every last penny."

He swallowed and then took several deep breaths, which seemed to fan shrewd embers in his eyes. "My own tongue must have conspired with the thieves while I slept. How else could they have known my little plan for Brogan? And each night when I let myself into his shop with my landlord's key to lay out the next batch of shoes, my traitorous ears reported no scurry-scurry-scurry behind me. None. But that tipsy old woman's ears heard—yes, they heard. And my eyes went over to my enemies, too, for when I dumped the basins of milk out the window they always pretended to watch the cats fight over the butter pats in the moonlight so they wouldn't see the thieves lurking in the dark corners of the shop. Even my sweet dreams conspired to distract me from the sound of hammer and chisel burrowing from the shoemaker's cellar into my vault."

The police chief announced that he would have the city searched for the thieves. But Noodle suggested instead that a mounted party be sent to check the highway leading to the border. "I'm afraid we're too late then," said the police chief, hurrying off. "They'll be out of the kingdom by now."

The Fool turned back to Pupp. "And what would you have done with the block once you'd run off all the leaseholders?" he asked.

"All right, I'll tell you my grand design," answered Pupp with a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shrug. "Why not? What can you do? Confiscate my wealth? I have none. Send me into exile? I'm already an alien in the most foreign land of all, for my senses have gone over to the enemy." He shook his head in vigorous self-pity.

"Look," he continued, "I bought that block of Primrose for a song—a collection of fine old buildings a bit gone to seed and not too far from downtown. My friends among the King's advisors had told me the Disenchantment Laws were in the works. I knew half the business on the block would have to close and the leases would revert to me. The others went under in the natural course of things or I disposed of them in my own way. Except for Brogan. I thought the wallet annuity business would finish him off. Then all I'd need to make a fortune would be a lick and a promise, a little plaster and paint, a few geraniums in flowerpots, a doorman or two, a canopy or three, four trendy boutiques, five chichi little restaurants, everything catering to the young, upwardly mobile professional courtier. A brilliant idea, don't you all agree?

"And my sweetest dream was that generations to come would name this process of neighborhood rehabilitation after good old Gentry W. Pupp. Yes, I dreamed they'd call the whole business 'puppification.' " He squinted hard, as though trying to make out this new word on tomorrow's lips. He gave up with a woeful smile and continued.

"But Brogan was a tough nut to crack until a month ago while I was visiting the capital two kingdoms over on Pupp's Patented Army Small Tent business. Browsing in a used-book stall, I came across this volume about elves, with a whole chapter on those of the shoemaker variety. And right after, sitting in a shoe store admiring my feet in a pair of two-tone wingtips—strange how new shoes make your feet look like someone else's—the whole thing suddenly came to me: Brogan was due for an infestation of elves. I needed a dozen pair of shoes to pull it off. But of course I was too clever to buy them then and there. People remember purchases that size. No, I came back later, wearing a disguise I carry in my grip for just such occasions." Pupp smiled at his own cleverness.

"A red beard?" asked Noodle.

The man's jaw dropped. His body sagged like a collapsed bell tent and he folded his arms tightly across his chest. "Am I so transparent that even my thoughts betray me?" he whispered. "Why, then, I will think no more. . ."

An hour later, a mounted detachment of police returned with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thieves in custody and leading a pack animal loaded down with Pupp's money. As Noodle had suspected, the thieves were Mr. Green and the two Wright Brothers. They might easily have crossed the border ahead of the police if their party hadn't been stopped several times by armed bands of desperately lonely magicians, who fanned out playing-cards and refused to let them pass until they had taken a card, any card, looked at it, put it back in the deck, and were properly mystified by what followed.

The tall Wright brother from the spectators' gallery acted as spokesman when they were brought before the Fool. "Your Honor," he said, "my brother and I spent our exile in the capital two kingdoms over, where we opened Kitty Hock, a pawnshop for pet owners. Later our fellow exile, Mr. Green here, joined us in the business. Well, a month or so ago, on my afternoon off, who should I pass on the street but the guy with the red beard, the one who'd palmed off the flying carpet on us. I trailed him to a shoe store. When he came out again, with two shop assistants carrying his purchases, I followed him to a small hotel near the Cathedral.

"I waited. When he came out again, he was cleanshaven. But I recognized him from his snappy two-tone wingtips. And guess who it was? Our old landlord, Mr. Pupp. I saw him take a table in a sidewalk cafe and bury himself in a copy of Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Elves of the Eastern Kingdoms*. Now, we'd been keeping in touch back home and knew that Brogan was the only leaseholder left on the block. From the look of things—the book, all those shoes—Brogan was going to get set up under the Little Man Act.

"Well, my brother, Mr. Green, and I decided two could play the elf game. We returned here in disguise, traveling in the same caravan with Pupp. Every night we followed him to the shoemaker's shop and slipped in after him. Then when he'd left, we worked on our tunnel, carrying the rubble out to the old bottomless well on the corner. Then every morning when old Brogan went to the corner newsstand, we sneaked out of the shop.

"But what if he was arrested before we reached the vault? What if the tunnel was discovered? We took turns watching the shop during the daylight hours. Sure enough, when we only had inches to go on the tunnel I saw the police come and take Brogan off. I followed along back here to the Hall of Laws. That's when I got this brainstorm to get Pupp involved. With him in court, we could break through into his vault and make our getaway."

The story ended abruptly. It was time to pass judgment. The Fool

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looked down at Pupp, who hadn't moved or spoken since he swore off thinking. What would this madman care if he was exiled and his worldly goods added to the Royal coffers? Then the King would be happy and one day Noodle's son would be High Justice. But as the Fool opened his mouth to speak, he saw the just way. And he could not swallow it nor wait for any chimney—justice delayed being justice denied. "Mr. Pupp will be confined to the madhouse where urban redevelopers and other visionaries are lodged," he heard his voice say. "His wealth will be divided among those he falsely accused before the law. In addition, the King is ordered to return to the Wright Brothers and Mr. Green the wealth confiscated as the result of those false charges. Plus interest."

Secundus II jumped up angrily and threw off his mask, obliging the spectators to recoil in mock surprise. But here, as if to associate himself with what the Fool had done, Gavel cried out, "I always knew that tent-and-awning maker was a shady character!"

As the sun set behind the trees, Noodle, back in ass's ears and coxcomb, and Gavel, with his fur-trimmed robe and square hat, sat on the ramparts and sighed in unison. "I almost had a son with thumbs," said the High Justice in an amazed voice.

"And I'd have taught him those wonderfully long stories that make up the shaggy-dog breed," said Noodle, who sighed again before adding, "And I almost had a son as wise as his back was straight."

"Whom I'd have taught the delights of maritime law like bottomry and barratry, and the wonders of childish law like nonage, pupilage, and adoption."

"Adoption?" asked the Fool.

The job took several law clerks working into the morning hours and a presiding judge of the court of childish law who was prepared to get ink on his pajamas. However, before the start of the Royal birthday ceremonies, the Fool had adopted Gavel's son and the High Justice had adopted Noodle's. Secondus II, who couldn't tell one pair of thumbs or one hump from another, was none the wiser. But in later years he did find it strange that the High Justice Emeritus laughed so loudly and looked around so proudly whenever the new Royal Fool did the ear-wag. And he often wondered why the old humpbacked Noodle spent so much of his retirement pacing beneath the open windows in the overgrown courtyard of the Hall of Laws when the new young High Justice was presiding on the bench.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

first publication in the U.S.

"We'll wait till the evening," announced Ralph, "and then climb up the battlements at Belcaro. Perhaps, Victor," he continued, "you wouldn't mind reciting something for us? The battlements have these fantastic acoustics. I've always wanted to hear a really magnificent voice like yours make use of them . . ."

ON THE BATTLEMENTS

by ANTONIA FRASER

It was at least three o'clock in the morning and there was Letty coming out of the cottage next door. Melanie could see her quite clearly. The Italian night never seemed quite dark, or was it because all the stars were still out? In any case, there was no mistaking Letty: all that hair.

Like a fox with a thick brush, thought Melanie. And there was altogether something of a nocturnal animal about the way Letty paused and seemed to sniff the night air. She was poised gracefully on the doorstep—one paw was raised—then she padded across the grass back to the main house.

The thought of the house brought Melanie round sharply to the subject of Letty's husband Victor. It was, of course, Alistair Drummond who was sleeping in the cottage. For a moment, sleepily, she had supposed it must be Victor. But she had put Letty and Victor upstairs in the two single rooms in their Tuscan farmhouse. Victor was an actor and said by Letty to be extremely exhausted after a taxing season at Stratford—hence the separate rooms. Alistair, as the odd man out, or the unhappy bachelor (as he preferred to term it), had been put in their cottage annex. Not so unhappy tonight, it seemed, with a visit from Letty.

Letty and Alistair—and Victor asleep upstairs. Really, Letty was a *lunatic*. Supposing Victor woke up? Surely even the most successful

© 1987 by Antonia Fraser.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

season could hardly be guaranteed to provide total immobility? And then Victor was so attractive, and the marriage was hardly more than a year old, even if Letty had had an affair with him for a long time before that. Victor with his handsome open face—Melanie searched it in her mind's eye—a sort of latter-day Leslie Howard. Was Letty bored with Victor already or was it the fact of marriage which did not suit her?

Then *Alistair*, that irresponsible boy, with his energy and his springy red hair. Perhaps Letty had a penchant for red hair. Were red-haired men more passionate? Victor had thick fair hair, which Melanie personally much preferred, but she had to admit she was an innocent in these matters, depending, to tell the truth, a great deal on Letty for guidance in them. Well, there was no guidance to be had from Letty at this hour of the night. At least Ralph hadn't woken up, that was something to be thankful for—the dark shape in their bed did not stir. Balked of she knew not quite what prey, Melanie slid carefully between the sheets beside him and fell into sleep.

Although it was still only May, the next morning the sun was so hot that no one had the energy to go sightseeing. In the original decision by Ralph to purchase a farmhouse in Tuscany, the prospect of frequent cultural expeditions—to Siena, to Florence—had played much part. Melanie suspected that he enjoyed the organization of such outings as much if not more than the fulfillment of them. Now Ralph gazed at their guests, clustered under the olive trees planted round the swimming pool like cows seeking the shade. Letty was rubbing sun-oil into Victor's back, with Alistair loudly demanding his turn. To Melanie's watchful gaze it was all innocent enough, if not very active.

"We'll wait till the evening," announced Ralph, "and then climb up the battlements at Belcaro. You can see right over to Siena."

"It's ravishing there in the twilight," added Melanie. "Most romantic."

"I'm all for a spot of that," said Alistair with enthusiasm. It was, Melanie had to admit, the sort of remark he would probably have made anyway. Letty continued to rub Victor's white back, with its ruffle of blond hairs along the spine, with delicate strokes of her fingers.

"Perhaps, Victor, you wouldn't mind reciting something for us?" continued Ralph. "The battlements have these fantastic acoustics.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I've always wanted to hear a really magnificent voice like yours make use of them. Even better than the stage at Stratford." Ralph was referring to Victor's recent much-acclaimed performance of Henry V.

"A treat!" exclaimed Letty. She was in a very good mood this morning—the cat, thought Melanie, fox last night, cat this morning, the cat who had had its bowl of cream. There was definitely something feline about Letty when she was contented. But Victor, too, seemed content. Did he know anything? Melanie had scrutinized his face at breakfast with morbid care. It was as amiable as anyone could wish. It was, of course, possible that he was acting a part. After all, Victor *was* an actor and presumably could act in private if he chose. On the other hand, as he generally played such heroic parts on the stage—the complement to his equable nature in private—would he really be capable of dissimulating a tranquility he didn't feel? It was a conundrum and Melanie gave it up in favor of pouring coffee. She felt herself rewarded when throughout the day Victor remained placid, agreeable, good-mannered. Intermittently he studied a new part. Alistair, in contrast, tended to bound restlessly about the pool area, chattering, laughing, teasing Letty, and, presumably, disturbing Victor.

"All the same, Mel, I'm glad you asked that Alistair," Ralph observed at six o'clock, as he prepared himself for the evening's expedition by shaving. Melanie watched him as he stood in the rather primitive new bathroom created for their joint needs. Beyond Ralph's head, a window framed a perfect view of hills, cypresses, and the reddish tower of an occasional villa, which might have formed the background for any of the pictures they admired so industriously in their sightseeing.

Ralph continued: "Funny chap, Victor. He's awfully quiet in private, isn't he? I mean, I'm terribly fond of him, but he's not a bit like he is on stage, always waving swords and shouting. Awfully good manners and all that, but almost dull in a way."

"Letty likes him. He suits her," said Melanie. She hoped it was true.

"You would have thought that Letty would have gone for someone a little more fiery, though, a little more go in him."

"I suppose she can always watch Victor on the stage for all that," replied Melanie vaguely. "I mean, actors have that advantage, don't they?"

Ralph scraped and grimaced and talked. "All the same, I wouldn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mind if the old boy did a bit more bounding about the swimming-pool and waving a sword and shouting at lunchtime." He paused appreciatively. "Like Alistair. What is more, I bet old Letty wouldn't mind, either."

They took two cars to Belcaro. Letty sat in front of the big English estate car which Alistair drove, and Melanie—she had to admit the motive to herself—chaperoned them from the back. That left Victor and Ralph in the Fiat.

"I'll prepare Victor for his part," said Ralph. "Romeo, perhaps. I'll never forget your Romeo, Victor. *It is the east and Juliet is the sun*—give or take the time of day, of course." But whatever success Ralph was having in the Fiat with his directing, Melanie's chaperonage in the estate car was a complete failure. Letty unashamedly kissed Alistair's cheek while he was driving, and Alistair, even more boldly, put his left hand in Letty's lap. Finally Melanie could bear it no longer.

"Letty, does Victor know about all this?" she burst out, while Alistair was temporarily out of the car paying for petrol.

"Of course not. Victor hasn't the least idea." Letty sounded quite shocked. The trouble was that Melanie could think of no effective way of remonstrating with her. There was something so reckless—no, reckless was too weak a word—so, well, violent about the way Letty threw herself at situations that the very violence carried you along with it. Ralph was right. In a way, it was hardly surprising that Letty found herself bored with the mild and disarming Victor.

As the blue of the sky began to deepen, the castle of Belcaro rose up above their heads out of a dark sea of protecting foliage. It seemed to have no connection with the surrounding plain.

"A castle in a fairy tale," exclaimed Letty. "Could that be a rose hedge?"

"Ilexes for Sleeping Beauty," said Melanie.

"And you're the princess," said Alistair with a quick fond smile sideways at Letty. "If not always so sleepy," he added. Yes, it was fortunate the two parties were separated. However, when both cars, having passed the ilex barrier, drew up together outside the postern gates of the castle, its very scale, the immensity of the masonry, the oppressive quiet of the remote fortress, united them. It was as though they were all travelers seeking shelter.

"It's too late. It's shut," said Letty suddenly. She looked tiny against the gate and slightly defiant. But it was surely out of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

question that Letty would be pleased at the abandonment of an adventure.

"No, no," said Ralph, "I telephoned the caretaker. They'll let us in. We've done it before. Push the gate, Letty, and see." Letty pushed the heavy iron-barred gate. This time Melanie had a distinct feeling that Letty, devil-may-care Letty, was in some way nervous. Alistair ran forward to help her. Together they headed the procession up the path inside the first wall, which led to another smaller door. Alistair opened it and Letty passed in. Then Victor walked past them both and stood gazing out at the prospect revealed in the interior.

Unexpectedly, the battlements on which they now stood looked down into a courtyard in which a complete house, perhaps of the Renaissance period, had been built against one wall of the castle. One or two lights already showed there. The battlements circled round it, punctuated from time to time by little flights of steps and miniature turrets. Ralph was right. The effect was extraordinarily theatrical.

"It positively calls for a performance," exclaimed Ralph. "Perfect for *Romeo and Juliet*."

"Somehow I thought of *Macbeth*," replied Victor. His back was still turned.

"You mean the crow is making wing to the rooky wood?" contributed Melanie hopefully. It was the line she knew best in the play. Victor did not answer.

"I think it's everything that *Romeo and Juliet* ought to be!" cried Letty. Ralph took Melanie's hand and squeezed it. Melanie guessed that Alistair might be doing the same thing to Letty, but in any case Victor, who was ahead, would hardly notice. The little party, under Victor's leadership, filed along the battlements toward the far turret. The lights of Siena twinkling in the distance made the town look like a gold crown spread out on the ground. The glow of the courtyard became more prominent and the sky began to lose its color.

"Midnight blue," said Letty in a poetic voice.

"It's about eight-o'clock blue, actually." That was Alistair, making a joke as usual. "I've got those eight-o'clock blues."

"Curtain up!" Ralph ignored Alistair's attempts at crooning. "Now, Victor, give us your all." Victor turned round and backed a few steps up the turret so that he gazed down on his audience. He looked extraordinarily handsome in the waning light, a beseeching lover, a chivalrous knight from a Burne-Jones picture. Victor raised

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his eyes beyond their heads, and when he began to speak in his beautiful voice it was like the consummation of romance.

"*Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow*," began Victor, his voice echoing round the battlements as Ralph had promised it would, "*creeps on this petty pace from day to day, to the last syllable of recorded time.*" Melanie's reaction was of sheer surprise. She had been in such complete expectation of Shakespeare's tender love sonnets that it was as if Victor had in some way jumped his lines. But when Victor pronounced the words "'*tis a tale told by an idiot*," it was said with such savage fury that Melanie turned instinctively to Letty. "I had thought somehow a sonnet—"

"So did I."

"It's so romantic up here."

"Evidently Victor doesn't think so."

"Letty, do you think perhaps that after all Victor—?"

"Out of the question. He just likes *Macbeth*. The place reminds him of it. He said so when we first arrived."

"It reminds the rest of us of *Romeo and Juliet*."

But Victor followed up his lines from *Macbeth* with a speech beginning: "*Behold you simpering dame*" and containing, to Melanie, the hardly reassuring words:

"*Down from the waist they are centaurs*
"*Though women all above.*"

Letty was frowning.

"It's *King Lear*, the mad scene," she whispered to Melanie. "I remember it because Victor played Edgar at the National. The speech begins with something about the adultery."

Now Victor was on ground more familiar to Melanie. "*Get thee to a nunnery, why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?*"

That was hardly the essence of romance. It was true that Victor had played Hamlet only one season back, but surely one of the famous soliloquies might be more appropriate? Ralph's voice echoed her thoughts:

"How about '*To be or not to be*,' then?" he said with undiminished heartiness. Had Ralph not noticed the gathering violence in Victor's tone?

"*Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I*" was said in tones of such unsuppressed passion (surely he had not given the speech like that at Stratford) that the famous words seemed quite robbed of any element of traditional indecision, while the battlements fairly rang to "*Bloody, bawdy villain! Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kind-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less villain!" And Victor chose to end the speech on the simple words *"O Vengeance!"* Melanie did not dare look at Letty.

"It's past eight o'clock," she said. "Should we be thinking of dinner?"

But Alistair, too, was uncontaminated by the atmosphere. "One last poem from Victor!" he suggested.

"Victor hasn't given us a proper poem yet." It was Ralph. He sounded childish and disappointed. Victor started to intone again.

"It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,
"Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars,
"It is the cause—"

Oh my God, it's *Othello*, thought Melanie. For greater effect—or unbearable tension?—Victor now turned his back on them again and delivered his lines toward the darkness of the plain where Siena now looked a far-distant and unattainable haven.

"When I have plucked the rose," hissed Victor in that low but carrying voice that only actors possess, *"I cannot give it vital growth again, it needs must wither."* And then, equally low, equally frenetic: *"One more, and this the last: So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep, but they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly; It strikes where it doth love."* As he finished speaking, Victor wheeled round. Melanie had time to realize that Letty and Alistair must have been holding hands in the darkness before they sprang apart. The whole episode reminded her of a sinister version of Grandmother's Footsteps.

"Now walk with me, Letty," said Victor.

Letty laughed. "It's too narrow to walk together, darling," she said. Her voice sounded amused, but Melanie was suddenly prompted to look down at her hands, white in the dusk. They were touching each other at the fingertips, twisting each other—praying, nervous hands. Beside them, the battlement dropped sheer to the ground on one side and to the courtyard on the other.

She really is frightened, thought Melanie. Suddenly her own fear drove out everything else, like a drum in her mind. Victor does know, Victor does know, Victor as Othello, Victor does know.

Victor turned back and walked forward. His voice—this time without invitation—was heard again: *"My wife! My wife! What wife? I have no wife. O insupportable! O heavy hour! Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse of sun and moon, and that the affrighted globe should yawn at alteration."* Dear God, would he now leave *Othello* alone?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Letty," Melanie said urgently, throwing caution away. "He must know."

"He *can't*." Letty still remembered to whisper, but it was a fierce whisper. She added, contradicting herself: "I'm terrified Victor's gone mad."

"*Who can be wise, amaz'd, temperate and furious, loyal and neutral in a moment? No man. The expedition of my violent love outran the pauser reason.*" What was this? *Macbeth* again? Well, at least that was getting away from *Othello.*

"Victor has never *played* Macbeth," whispered Letty. "I don't understand it."

"Well, he's certainly playing it now."

"Macduff, yes, Banquo I think twice, but never Macbeth." Letty seemed obsessed by Victor's theatrical past.

"Well, has he played Othello?"

"Of course not. Can you imagine Victor as Othello? The audience would burst into roars of laughter. The perfect English hero—no paint would be black enough to convince them."

"I think he's playing that now, too." And it was true. With grandiloquent flourishes, Victor was zipping his way through most of the words of Othello, pausing only for breaths which were more sucked than swallowed. In its own way it was an amazing virtuoso performance.

Victor broke off—"Now come up here, Letty."

Letty hesitated. She moved, stumbled, and was held by Alistair.

"Up here, Letty." Victor was implacable. Letty hesitated no longer, but walked delicately past Melanie, Alistair, and Ralph. In the dark Melanie suspected that Alistair took the opportunity to give Letty one of his quick little hugs.

"Now I'm here just behind you." Letty's voice came out of the darkness. Melanie, who found she had been holding her breath, let it out.

"Then I'll help you pass me. You shall lead us all, Letty." Letty's sharp scream, long drawn out and suddenly stopped, followed by the noise of falling masonry, were the next sounds Melanie heard.

Ralph shouted: "Hold her!" Alistair tried to pass Melanie. There was a view of Letty, hanging onto the edge of the battlements, with Victor bending over her.

"Save Letty!" It was Melanie's own voice, but at the same time Letty was somehow being helped up, and was now standing, very

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shakily, leaning against Victor. A moment later, Melanie registered with amazement that Victor had started to recite Othello again:

"*My wife! My wife! What wife? I have no wife.*" She would never be able to hear those words again, let alone go to a performance of *Othello*, without dread at the memory. There was a new sound of scrabbling as Ralph tried to reassure himself that Letty was now secure. Victor stopped reciting at last.

"I'm perfectly okay now, Ralph, really. False alarm." It was Letty speaking. "I thought I was slipping, that was all. Victor saved me." Melanie saw that Victor was holding Letty quite tightly now. They were reaching the end of the semicircle of battlements, and he seemed to be half pushing her, half propelling her forward. The courtyard far below seemed almost as remote as the lights of Siena. Both distances were immense, downward or away.

"I'm holding you now, Letty, aren't I?" said Victor. "You won't slip again, will you?"

"No, no—" Letty's soft voice, breathing hard.

"Say 'I won't slip again.' " There was an instant of silence. Letty was breathing so hard that Melanie, for the third time in twenty-four hours, was reminded by Letty of an animal—but now it was some frightened and panting animal in distress, not a proud fox or a sly cat but something captured and held, a runaway dog, a dog waiting to be beaten.

The stones on the battlements crunched and some feet moved sharply.

"I won't slip again." Victor's voice.

"I won't slip again, Victor." Letty's voice at last—soft, panting, frightened. It ended on a sigh. Melanie heard in it surprise, and also a kind of strange contentment. No, on the whole, she did not think Letty would slip again.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Griswold story by

ISAAC ASIMOV

One of Dr. Asimov's best Griswold stories (# 50!), with a solution totally new to us and a clue that's totally fair and (another clue for you) totally dependent on character . . .

THE STAMP

by ISAAC ASIMOV

I said, rather jubilantly, "I've thought up a story."

To which Baranov at once said with fine skepticism, "I bet it stinks."

"Not at all," I said. "It's the kind *he* tells. Griswold." And I jerked my thumb in the direction of the old man, whose head was resting quietly against one of the tall wings of his armchair while one hand rested quietly, with its whiskey and soda, on the chair-arm on the other side. He was snoring very softly.

Jennings said suspiciously, "What's it about?"

"Well, it's like this. A rich man dies and leaves a distant relative something valuable—"

"What something valuable?" demanded Jennings.

"Who knows? That's unimportant. The point is that he hid it in a room filled with all sorts of bric-a-brac. Whatever it is is very small in addition to being very valuable, and the distant relative searches and searches for it and comes up with nothing. Absolutely nothing. He goes to this friend of his who, let us say, is someone like Griswold and tells him the story. At once the friend says, 'Why, it must be in such-and-such a place,' and, of course, it is."

Baranov said, "And where is the place?"

"For goodness sake," I said, "*I* don't know. I still have to fill in some of the details."

© 1987 by Nightfall, Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Like what the object is and where it is," said Jennings. "You call that a story?"

Griswold stirred suddenly. "*I* call it a story—" he took a small sip of his drink and his icy blue eyes glared malevolently at me "—because it happened to me."

"What happened to you?" I said.

"That story you told. Precisely."

"You mean you're going to make up a story that will fit precisely my outline."

"I don't know about 'make up,' but it fits your outline."

"I dare you to tell me such a story," I said indignantly.

Since you express such enthusiasm [said Griswold] and are so anxious to hear it, I will gladly oblige you.

The central character in the tale I'm about to relate was Charles Plaggard, a prolific author of whom, doubtless, none of you have heard. For one thing, he wrote westerns and romances under pseudonyms, male for the westerns, female for the romances. And even if he had used his own name, none of you would have known him, since neither you nor anyone else of even the slightest pretensions to taste in literature would ever read him. However, that left a huge majority that lacked even those slightest pretensions and he became quite well off. Add to that some shrewd speculative investments that did well and you might say he even became quite rich.

As sometimes happens, however, worldly success did not satisfy Charles Plaggard. What he wanted was recognition. He wanted to be considered a great writer and a luminary of literature, and this he simply never got. He therefore planned to force himself, more or less, upon the world. In his will, he directed that the house he had lived in for three decades was to be converted into the "Charles Plaggard Literary Museum."

The five rooms that he occupied—it was a small but well appointed house—were to be kept in perpetuity in the condition in which they were left at his death, barring a certain minimum amount of maintenance in the way of cleaning and straightening up. A very generous salary was allowed for two people to maintain the house in this fashion and to keep it in service as a museum. Plaggard's work study was to be open to the public at fixed hours and Plaggard even dictated the exact words that were to be used to point out the various sights. Very laudatory words they were, too.

All the books he had written were on the shelves in that study,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and in every English-language edition, hard-covered and soft. They were in chronological order and all were first printings, for what that was worth.

There were also on display some of the manuscripts to his later books, though he had produced nothing at all in his final five years, having grown so absent-minded as to leave the suspicion he was approaching senility. There was also his old typewriter, his reference books, his stationery, a sheaf of correspondence—in short, all the paraphernalia one would think of.

All was done exactly as he directed. He had no wife, no family, no close relatives to contest the will, and, except for a few minor bequests to some servants and to a few local causes he was interested in, every bit of his estate went into this museum. It was not a successful museum; there were very few visitors. Still, the plan made him happy in his last years, and now, in the execution, it left each of the two overseers with a good salary and little to do. So it seemed an excellent thing all around.

However, Charles Plaggard had a second cousin once removed, who was his nearest living relative. Plaggard knew of him but had never met him. As for James Forrest, who was the second cousin once removed in question, he knew that Plaggard was *his* second cousin and knew also, rather dimly, that he was a writer, but it wasn't a matter that interested him.

Forrest was not mentioned in the will, nor would it occur to him to expect to be. Plaggard was a total stranger to him in any real sense but for the thin bond of relationship between them. Besides, Forrest had a career as a sales executive and was doing well. He had no compelling motive to look for bequests and inheritances. So Plaggard's death passed him by without a flicker. He only knew of it when he happened to notice a report on the obituary page of his newspaper.

But a year later, he received a letter from his dead cousin. No, this is not a ghost story, the supernatural doesn't enter into it. Plaggard had written it a few days before his death, but he had sent it off to the wrong address and the letter had wound its way through the inner recesses and murky underworld of the post office for a long time. Such letters sometimes disappear forever, and sometimes they are returned to sender within days. Occasionally, though, for no known reason, they lie low, then surface and reach their proper destinations after months, or years, or even in some rare cases decades.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Forrest read the letter—which was handwritten shakily but clearly—with astonishment. I have never committed it to memory, of course, but it went something like this:

"Dear Cousin Jim. It strikes me that since you are my only living relative I ought perhaps do something for you before leaving for my final port of call, in what will, my doctors inform me, in all likelihood be a week or less. I am determined to devote my estate to the establishment of an important museum which, I confidently hope, will finally give me the prestige I have long deserved.

"However, among my possessions there is an old misprinted stamp that I once picked up for next to nothing, and which I believe may be worth some really large sun to a genuine collector. It is crimson in color, is American, and is two cents in denomination. As to its worth, a hundred thousand dollars is not beyond the realm of possibility, and I would like for you to have it.

"I carefully hid it in my study some time ago. I am not at present in a condition to guard it properly, but I think it will be safe where I left it. Unfortunately, in the confusion of these last days I do not remember where I placed it, but I'm sure you can find it. Simply show this communication to my lawyer and he will allow you to look through the room in order to locate it."

As I said, Forrest was not on the lookout for bequests, but a hundred thousand dollars was nothing to be shoved aside, either. He consulted his own lawyer, who discovered old Plaggard's lawyer, and together they decided that the stamp might be searched for. Since the house was now a museum and the study was open to the public, the search would have to be conducted at those times when the museum was closed. It would also have to be searched for under the eyes of both lawyers and of the two people who maintained the museum and were responsible for its upkeep. Everything had to be handled with the greatest of care, of course, and put back exactly as it had been.

The study was searched steadily from 3:00 P.M. one Friday, when it was closed to the public, until 10:00 A.M. the following Tuesday, when it was reopened. During those hours, whenever Forrest took time out to eat or sleep or attend to natural functions, the room was sealed. When Forrest was actually searching, the two lawyers and the two overseers were present.

The search came to nothing. Although the room was filled with miscellany, it was not a really large one. The number of objects it held was finite and every single one of them was searched. Every

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

book was taken up and its pages examined, its dust sheet removed if it had one, its binding inspected. Every sheet of paper was separated from every other, every object was inspected inside and out. Everything that could be lifted was, and its bottom and the space under it was studied—as was each drawer of the desk and the filing cabinets. Every movable bookcase was shifted so that Forrest could look behind it. The carpet was taken up, the sofa virtually taken apart. Even the windows were opened so that the sashes might be studied.

But after hours and hours of the most painstaking search, the result was nothing. It was worse than nothing, in fact, for each lawyer charged Forrest a thousand dollars for his time and both overseers had to be paid overtime.

Some weeks afterward, Forrest came to see me. He was a rather thin young man, not very tall, and he had the rather frustrated look about him one would expect under the circumstances. He had heard about me from a mutual friend and somehow he had the idea that I could see further into a puzzling situation than most. It has always puzzled me how this sort of thing gets bruited about.

In any case, he told me the story exactly as I have told it to you, and then he asked, "Can you help me out in this, sir?"

I thought about it for a while and then I said, "The old man has been dead a year. The stamp might have been located at any time during that interval."

"That's true," said Forrest, "but no one was looking for it. No one even knew it existed."

"It might have been found by accident and just thrown away as part of the mess that ought to be cleaned up. I presume no one would know by looking at it that it was valuable."

"That's true enough, too," said Forrest, "but the two people in charge swear that no object like that was ever found, and they're the only two people who've ever done any cleaning. I believe them. If either of them had found the stamp and thrown it away, the news that he or she had thrown away a hundred thousand dollars would have shown clearly in his or her face. But they were both absolutely cool about the matter."

I nodded. "That makes sense," I said. "You must also remember, though, that the aged Plaggard may not have been entirely in his right mind when he wrote you that letter. He had hidden the stamp but didn't remember where. That rather shows the deplorable state of his mentality at the time. It's quite possible he had never hidden

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the stamp at all; in fact, he may never have had such a stamp at all. Writers tend to live in dream worlds at the best of times, and toward the end of life and the edge of senility they are surely not to be trusted."

That seemed to take Forrest aback, but he recovered and looked stubborn. "That may be so, but suppose it isn't? Is there anyplace I should have looked that I didn't look?"

That was asking a good deal, since I had never been in that study, didn't know what was there, and didn't know what and how Forrest had searched.

I said, "Tell me again all the things you did."

He did, and I thought very hard for a while. Finally I said, "A writer is concerned with his tools. He had perhaps untouched blank paper about?"

"Yes, white bond, onionskin, and second sheets. I took the trouble to look through all of them, page by page—and under them too."

"He had pens or pencils, I'm sure, and may have kept them in cups or cylinders?"

"Yes, he had a supply of pens upended in a cylinder. I took them out, inspected the cylinder, and the pens, too—and, listen, I'll tell you what I did. Some of the pens could be opened. Those I opened and took out the ink reservoir to see if the stamp had been spindled and placed inside."

"I doubt it," I said. "If it were a valuable stamp, he wouldn't want to fold it, spindle it, or in any way mishandle it. Small things can cause such a stamp to lose much value."

"I didn't find it inside the pens anyway."

"And you lifted the typewriter?"

"Yes, I did. And I turned it upside down and shook it and nothing fell out."

"I see. I imagine that in all the time since Plaggard died, no one has used the room as a writer might use it."

"Oh, no. The caretakers were firm on that. I asked if anyone but themselves had ever been in the room alone. They insisted that no one used the room. Only they themselves, and sightseers—what there were of them—and the two lawyers and I had entered. Nor had anyone ever done anything but look, except for some dusting and vacuuming and such things that they did to care for the place."

"A pity we can't examine a year's worth of vacuum dust-bags, but never mind. A thought occurs to me. Mr. Forrest—there's one thing you can do very easily. Just go there any time the workroom is open

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the public. The caretakers know you and should be willing to let you do one little thing. If not, wait till they're not looking and do it anyway. That may get you your stamp."

He did as I told him, and had his stamp in five seconds. It was by no means as valuable as Plaggard had thought, but a sizable sum was involved, enough to pay off Forrest's expenses and to pay me a small fee for my help as well. —And there's the story."

Griswold took a long sip of his drink and I said sardonically, "And there's the story? You mean he tore that room apart, but just sitting in your own armchair and never having been in that room you could tell him the one spot in which he didn't look."

"Isn't that how it was in the story *you* told?" demanded Griswold of me.

"Yes," said Baranov, "but he didn't have the faintest idea of the solution."

"Nor do you, Griswold," said Jennings. "You've faked the whole thing out of the outline."

Griswold's mouth twisted in a lordly sneer. "Really? Then you want me to tell you where Forrest found the stamp?"

"If you can," I said. "And right now."

"Very well," said Griswold. "The most sacred object to a writer of the old school is very likely to have been his typewriter. Forrest lifted the typewriter, turned it upside down, and shook it—but he didn't *use* it. Neither did anyone else. So I told Forrest to go back and turn the platen of the typewriter—turn the roller around which the paper goes when it's in use. He did—and there, revealed on its underside, was the stamp."

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions, including change of address, should be sent to P.O. Box 1930, Marion, Ohio 43305.

For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send your current mailing label with new address.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE JURY BOX
by ALLEN J. HUBIN

It's quite common for multiple authors to produce books about the same character. Even fairly frequently single authors have issued works about a particular protagonist under multiple bylines. But not very often does one encounter collaborative fictions in which two authors have combined their series characters. Four examples of this come to mind: Richard Prather and Stephen Marlowe put both Shell Scott and Chester Drum into *Double in Trouble* (1959); Stuart Palmer and Craig Rice incorporated Hildegarde Withers and John J. Malone in *People Vs. Withers and Malone* (1963); Bill Pronzini and Collin Wilcox featured the nameless private eye and Lieutenant Frank Hastings in *Twospot* (1978); and Pronzini and Marcia Muller brought Nameless and Sharon McCone to San Diego in *Double* (1965).

Now Pronzini and Muller return with another of these collaborations in *Beyond the Grave* (Walker, $15.95). This is the more ingenious in combining Muller's museum-director-cum-sleuth Elena Oliverez, who operates out of present-day Santa Barbara, and Pronzini's John Quincannon, a private investigator based in the San Francisco of 1894. The plot turns on valuable religious artifacts belonging to the once wealthy Valesquez family in the Santa Ynez Valley. This family's fortunes failed in the Bear Flag Rebellion of 1846 and the valuables vanished. Quincannon is retained to find them in 1894, Oliverez stumbles across his report in 1986, and the two story lines draw together to the considerable peril of both investigators. A worthy and absorbing effort, this, though a bit uneven (Pronzini is the better writer) and lacking the logical first-person narration in the 1894 portion.

A most impressive debut is *The Calculus of Murder* (St. Martin's $16.95) by Erik Rosenthal, a professor of mathematics in Massachusetts. His protagonist is Dan Brodsky, also possessor of a Ph.D. in mathematics, practicing the trade of private eyeing while awaiting an academic appointment. The setting is San Francisco, where Brodsky is trying to serve a subpoena on an extremely slippery and well guarded industrialist. And trying to prove that Bradford Melton's daughter did not in fact poison her moneyed father at the latter's birthday party. All this tends to interfere with job hunting and the mathematical research Dan would rather be doing, but some income is required to keep his 1952 Studebaker running. Difficult is the lot of the private sleuth, but stylish and entertaining is the Rosenthal account.

Laurence Payne returns with another of his tales about Mark Savage, actor turned private sleuth,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in *Dead for a Ducat* (Doubleday, $12.95). Here Savage becomes embroiled in the troubles of Sam Birkett, an old acquaintance and retired CID inspector as well as protagonist in several 1960s novels by Payne. Birkett's daughter has married one Tony Raven, scion of the well off Raven family. Young Raven has been kidnaped, money in quantity is demanded, and Raven's good friend has been murdered. Mark's help is requested. The police, of course, have an interest in the murder and would in the kidnaping—if they knew about it. But Sam and Mark, haring about on Mark's motorcycle from danger to danger, are playing this hand close to the vest. Zestful storytelling, much to be enjoyed.

Spiral (Atheneum, $16.95) is the third and longest novel by David L. Lindsey about Houston police detective Stuart Haydon. Mexican terrorists have begun to operate on Haydon's turf. Their first exercise is a public bloodbath, their next brings tragedy very close to Haydon. He's put on the sidelines, but takes on his own investigation independently. Clearly, Benigo Gamboa Parra, who lifted millions out of the Mexican economy and now resides under heavy guard in Houston, is involved. So, too, is *los tecos,* an organization which has sworn to kill Mexico's enemies. But when and by what means, and who else will die along the way? A grim and moving story.

The Fourth Widow (Mysterious Press, $15.95) is another of Harold Adams' tales of Carl Wilcox and 1930s small-town South Dakota. Those were shiftless, rootless, depressed years, and Wilcox is much their product. He's been in jail a couple of times, owing to overhelpfulness to needy ladies, and as a result is prime suspect when a young woman who worked at his parents' hotel is beaten to death. While the town's one-track cop is looking to put Carl away for good, Wilcox is probing the woman's background. Who was she so involved with as to produce murderous rage? Evocative storytelling.

In *The 120-Hour Clock* (Walker, $15.95), Francis M. Nevins, Jr., gives a novel-length adventure to his con man Milo Turner, heretofore only found in short stories. This is a wide-ranging story, very involving, told in an agreeably open style; it's Nevins' best novel to date. Turner makes his living extracting funds mostly from those with no more right to them than he. He assumes and discards convincingly documented identities like shirts. Here we learn of Turner's origins, follow several well crafted financial extractions, see love and murder collide, and finally explore a deadly scam intended to produce more revenge than revenue and related to a peculiarity in inheritance law.

William Dougal and his nemesis, Hanbury, return in Andrew Taylor's *An Old School Tie* (Dodd, Mead, $15.95). Here Hanbury has married a good and wealthy lady of the village of Rosing and apparently turned respectable. But the good lady dies. An accident, say the police. Murder by Hanbury, say the natives, and close ranks. Odd, given

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their history, that Hanbury should ask Dougal for help. Odder still that William should agree. But he does, poking about in village intrigues stretching over decades to see who might really be a killer. If not Hanbury. A good story, rich in character and setting.

Traitor's Blood by Reginald Hill (Foul Play, $16.95) is non-series suspense. Lem Swift inherited his father's enterprise when the latter defected to Russia. Inspired by hatred of the elder Swift, Lem turned the operation into an agency for embezzlement and arms dealing, decamping to Venezuela one step ahead of the hoofbeats of the Law. Now under medical sentence of death, Lem sneaks back into England for a hoped-for last meeting with his daughter. He's ensnared by murky Intelligence types, who haul him off to Italy to kill his traitorous father, who's on his way back to England with plans that can't be allowed to ripen. How thick is blood? A twisty, mobile tale.

An excellent fresh crop of paperback reprints includes the following. From Holt: *Night Ferry to Death* and *Down Among the Dead Men* by Patricia Moyes ($3.95 each). From Foul Play Press: *The Annulet of Gilt* and *The Perennial Boarder* by Phoebe Atwood Taylor ($5.95 each). From Signet: *An Advancement of Learning* by Reginald Hill ($2.95). From Penguin in its new Classic Crime series: *A Puzzle for Pilgrims, A Puzzle for Fiends,* and *A Puzzle for Fools* by Patrick Quentin, *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor* by Cameron McCabe, and *Reputation for a Song* by Edward Grierson ($5.95 each). From Academy Chicago: *Our Jubilee Is Death* by Leo Bruce ($4.95, first American edition). From Dell: *The Deer Leap* by Martha Grimes and *A Shock to the System* by Simon Brett ($3.50 each). From Mysterious Press: *Colonel Butler's Wolf* by Anthony Price and *Cast a Yellow Shadow* by Ross Thomas ($3.95 each). From Perennial: *The Money Harvest* and *If You Can't Be Good* by Ross Thomas ($3.50 each), *There Was a Crooked Man* by Clifford Witting, *Deadly Meeting* by Robert Barnard, *Through a Glass Darkly* by Val Gielgud, and *Strong Poison, Clouds of Witness, Hangman's Holiday, In the Teeth of the Evidence, Whose Body, Unnatural Death,* and *Lord Peter* by Dorothy L. Sayers ($3.95 each—except the last, which is $8.95). From Scribners: *No Footprints in the Bush* and *The Torn Branch* by Arthur W. Upfield ($3.95 each). From St. Martin's: *Sudden Death Finish* by Tucker Halleran ($3.50). From Charter: *Red Chameleon* by Stuart M. Kaminsky ($3.50). From Berkley: *Miss Marple* by Agatha Christie ($7.95—all the Marple short stories), and *Envious Casca* by Georgette Heyer ($2.95). From Bantam: *Death and the Mad Heroine* by S. F. X. Dean, *The Missing Mr. Mosley* by John Greenwood, and *The Puzzle of the Red Stallion* by Stuart Palmer ($2.95 each). And from Harcourt: *Maigret Hesitates* and *Maigret and the Millionaires* by Georges Simenon ($3.95 each).

© *1987 by Allen J. Hubin.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN
THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

READER SERVICES

MOVING?

Please give us four to six weeks' notice of a change of address. Please check the appropriate box.

Even if you have notified the post office about your change of address, please fill out and mail this form to us to ensure accurate delivery of your magazine.

NEW SUBSCRIPTION OR RENEWAL?

Twelve issues of ***ELLERY QUEEN'S*** Mystery Magazine for only $16.97. Please check the appropriate box. *CANADA: ADD $3 FOR POSTAGE*

UNLISTING SERVICE?

ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine makes available to other quality publications and carefully screened companies the names of its subscribers. If, however, you do not wish to have your name made available, please check the appropriate box.

- ☐ New Subscription
- ☐ Renewal
- ☐ Payment enclosed
- ☐ Bill me later
- ☐ Change of address; please note new address
- ☐ Please do not make my name and address available to other publications or companies.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ APT NO _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Attach mailing label here and send to:

ELLERY QUEEN'S
Mystery Magazine
Box 1930 • Marion, OH 43305

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

BARBARA HAFEN

Love coves, she and Mark had always called them, since discovering the first one. Places hard to reach but worth the trouble.

"I'll be careful," she told him. "There's fried chicken in the fridge if you can't wait. But we'll be back before dark . . ."

WATCHED LIKE BIRDS

by BARBARA HAFEN

In the grove's motionless shadow, the frame of the old house cracked faintly like something left too long in an oven. Maida, moving naked around her room behind closed windows, drawn curtains, could smell the funky incense of dry shingles on the sunward side, hear a clatter of eucalyptus buttons against the eaves as some bird heavily took flight. The sound was like skeletal knuckles knocking. Then she shut her mind firmly against that notion. Her imagination was increasingly unruly these days. Mark said she should try for Timothy's sake to be more practical, less dramatic. He was probably right. She missed the outlet of her Little Theater.

She pulled on a cotton shift, briefly cool from the depths of her bureau drawer, and went padding down the hall toward Timothy's room. Under her bare soles, the tiles seemed to sweat.

Wouldn't it help to open the front and back doors, catch a cross-current? But outside, the day was equally breathless. And anyway, she had promised Mark to keep the doors bolted when he was away. She hated her self-made trap, though—hated this vague apprehension that weighted the atmosphere like an odor of decay. She often found herself inhaling shallowly, pausing to listen for a motion of something out there in the simmering woods, as if there might be something watching this old summer cottage which once had been

© 1987 by Barbara Hafen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

so open yet secure. That morning, she had suddenly realized that she never turned the radio on any more, or played her records, in order to listen better. She never picked up her guitar.

Timothy lay on his bottom bunk, skinny brown knees splayed to support his book. She touched his damp, wheat-colored curls and knelt to see what he was reading with such absorption. *Dinosaurs in Space.* Naturally.

"Hey, Sweetie." He did not respond except with a slight wiggle. "Hey, let's go to the beach."

His round eyes cleared, lifted to focus on her. "You said it would be too crowded because of Saturday."

"Yes, but it's getting later now, so some of the people might be leaving. It's almost late enough to be getting breezy over there."

"Breezy," he repeated sensually.

On the phone at Stanford, in his lab, Mark asked, "Which beach?"

"San Gennario. Why?"

"You know why." They never said anything specific with Timothy listening. He paused. "Just—you know. So that I know you're around other people. Not in one of those lonely little hideaways."

Love coves, they had always called them, since discovering the first one. Places hard to reach but worth the trouble. She smiled at a certain memory. Sand sticking to their skins, a flavor of suntan lotion and cheap burgundy traded mouth to mouth. "I'll be careful. Darling? There's fried chicken in the fridge if you can't wait. But we'll be back before dark."

Blond hills pulsed radiance, their dried-grass slopes as slick as snow between dark blotches of oak and eucalyptus and bay. Landward behind Maida's old Volkswagen, a few turkey vultures balanced like kites against the colorless sky. Timothy said, "Those old vultures—"

"Yes?"

"Well, they're looking for something dead. Maybe there's a cow or something down there getting good and rotten."

"Yuck," said Maida with determined nonchalance. She was still trying to get used to children's affection for nastiness. Timothy's friends in second grade were all the same. Well, it was probably a healthy, predictable phase, like dinosaurs. They learned a lot of facts from those nature programs on television.

She switched on the radio, aiming for the classical-music station,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hoping for something cool, like Debussy or Respighi. *The Fountains of Rome.* But then she had to make a tricky turn onto Highway One and a news announcer said, "—another victim of the strangler police have come to call The Professor, because of his trademark of leaving a volume of love poems at the death scene. Two survivors have described his educated manners and high style of dress. The murdered woman, Kathy Mayhew of San Jose, was discovered in a brushy ravine near Filmer Reservoir. Her jogging clothes had been torn—" Maida grabbed for the switch, but got the volume control instead, and as she braked for a truck the newscaster roared, "*—brings to twelve the score of known Peninsula and Bay Area victims raped and murdered in the past fifteen months.*" Maida silenced him, shaken, and cast a glance at her son in the seat beside her. He seemed uninterested. Possibly he had not even heard, lost in fantasies about space.

Now they were nearing the coast. Its potent perfume made her nose quiver when she turned off the air-conditioning and rolled down the windows. Such delicious freshness flowing over her bare shoulders and thighs. It lifted her spirits—she felt she was really breathing for the first time in weeks.

"Mama," Timothy said in his dreaming way, "maybe those turkey vultures smelled a murdered lady down there and they were just waiting to make sure she was dead enough to be good."

"Tim," Maida said sharply, "that's revolting! Vultures eat mice and things. Almost exclusively. Now I really don't want to hear about vultures any more." She knew she had made a terrible child-psychology gaffe with that one. She should have remained cool and said something wise. But what? He gave her a skeptical glance. They both knew that theoretically he could be right.

The coast was overhung with haze. Damp, definite as a curtain, it enveloped them when they unloaded their things in the parking area. Timothy wore around his neck a pair of old opera glasses. Maida shrugged into the shoulder straps of her day-pack laden with towels, lotion, a bag of peanut-butter sandwiches, two cans of what Mark called rootzy pop, and a nice new paperback by Margaret Lucke, her favorite detective writer. Suddenly she felt so relieved, her knees were wobbly. The heat of the past week had been harder to bear than she knew.

The nearer stretches of beach were still crowded with prostrate bodies. A few hearty children of all ages screamed and bounded in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the surf. A man trained his bird glasses on a flight of pelicans. Frisbees flew, to the joy of several dogs illegally at large. Beyond the first dune, two beautiful young bodies were drowning in the pleasures of proximity. "What are those men kissing for?" Timothy shouted. "Are they gay?"

"Apparently so," Maida muttered, striding on. She wondered whether anything could really have prepared her to deal with Timothy. Maybe Mark was right when he suggested they try to suppress him a bit, as well as cut down on the fantasy games. But it was hard not to play with such an interesting child.

Maida was always surprised to observe how lazy most people were. Or perhaps they just didn't object to being crammed together in one spot like a colony of sea lions. Ten minutes down the beach, trailing in and out of the surf, she and Tim passed fewer and fewer sunbathers. Even the sand was comparatively unmarked by footprints. Desirable seashells twinkled uncollected among hanks of kelp. Timothy foraged passionately for these and other, more corruptible marine loot, which Maida patiently put into her pack. Peering out to sea, he announced the passing of a vessel. "Might be a spy ship," he said. "From the Black Planet."

"Might be a fishing boat," said Maida firmly, "catching some salmon that we can buy tomorrow at the Farmer's Market."

He spotted something gleaming in a wave rolling ahead of them up the beach, then being sucked back out in the undertow. It proved to be a green bottle, miraculously unbroken, still with a cork in it and a little wine which he carefully washed out. "Probably poison," he said with satisfaction. "It looked more like pee, though."

"Well, maybe some poor person had to go, and didn't want to pollute the Pacific."

He laughed and laughed, overcome by this hilarious witticism. When he recovered, he asked, "Is the tide going out or coming in?"

"In, I think," Maida said. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, if it's going out and we have some paper, we could send a message asking for help."

"Do we need help?"

There was a long pause. He stood in swirling foam up to his thighs, contemplating the horizon. "You never know," he said somberly.

Maida considered the surf, and the sun beginning to redden through clots of haze as it lowered toward evening. The bluffs flanking them were increasingly high and abrupt as they wandered on. "Well, we don't want to get stranded here, that's for sure," she said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We'd better be turning back before long." The view was blurred now in all directions and the beach was narrowing. Tossing a driftwood stick ahead of them a little way, she saw it vanish. That seemed disquieting somehow, almost ominous. Dry sand hissed under the spill of the day's highest wave. She instinctively grabbed Timothy's hand and pulled him closer in. She had no sense of time or how far they had walked—everything was indistinct. But right there around the bend was a marvelous rock—almost a cave on one side—where they could hide from the giant Sea Pterodactyls and eat their sandwiches. The top of the rock was level and smooth, a platform. She climbed up and inspected it.

"Well, I do delcare," she said. "Here's the stage of the old Moulin Rouge, where I used to perform as a star. Then, one day, it simply washed away. Now here it is again. I was the toast of Paris—known as Jane Avril."

Timothy was grinning up at her. "Was I born then?"

"No, it was a little before your time." She did a pirouette and limbered up with a high kick. "I certainly could Can-Can."

"What's that?"

"Like this." She pranced back and forth, tossing invisible petticoats and humming Poulenc.

"It looks silly," said Timothy frankly. "Did your costume wash up here, too?"

"I don't know. I'll take a look." Breathless, she walked along the rock and glanced down into the sheltered nook on the other side.

There, stretched out on a striped beach towel among random clumps of dry seaweed, lay a naked woman staring up at her. She was slender, young. Shocked, startled, and flustered, Maida nevertheless noticed in a flash the girl's small breasts and gracefully indolent long legs. One hand lay across her forehead, fingers intertwined with strands of red-gold hair blown untidily around her face and neck. The other rested on an open book half covered with sand. There was nothing—should have been nothing—unnatural about a sunbather surprised in her retreat.

What did seem not only unnatural but eerie was her total silence, and, worse still, her expression—a fixed smirking smile such as a lunatic waiting in ambush behind a closet door might wear. Maida gasped a kind of exclamation of dismay or apology, scrambled crabwise back across the rock toward Timothy, and grabbed his hand.

He hurtled along beside her, surprised but rather pleased at this abrupt change of scenario. In and out of the rising surf, floundering

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through rocky pools, they ran for a hundred yards or so before Maida, panting and with a stitch in her side, stopped to look back. Her panic subsiding a little, she felt ashamed of herself. The haze, shot through with a diffuse sunset light, hid everything but the outlines of the cliff and its nearby fallen tumulus. The shoreline beyond seemed empty. Gulls melted swiftly into vapor above their heads. It was getting chilly. Maida shivered. "Timothy," she said, "did you see that lady back there by the big rock?"

"Oh, yes, I saw her."

"Well—I'm wondering whether she's all right. Maybe she was asleep or something, and now the tide is coming in." She hesitated, gnawing her lip. "Look through your opera glasses—can you see anything?"

He raised them to his eyes and gazed back. "It's okay," he said. "She's standing up and shaking sand out of her things. Now she's walking along the beach."

Maida felt dizzy with relief and rather foolish. Thank God there was to be no problem. Could she just walk away and abandon anyone, even a strange person who might be drugged, or mad? Would she have dared to involve Timothy in the risk?

It was later than she had supposed. Only one car besides their own remained in the parking area. Below, near the surf, its owner stood watching a gaggle of sandpipers stilting about in the foam. Maida had noticed him training his binoculars on her and Timothy as they mounted the bluffside path.

Nervously exhausted, she slid behind the wheel of her trusty Bug, switched on the ignition, and promptly flooded the engine. That was always happening if she didn't pay attention.

As she waited, the birdwatcher approached his own car. He was a slight man, built like a runner, attractively tan, wearing a navy T-shirt and well cut khaki shorts. Hearing the petulant noise of the Volkswagen, he detoured and stopped to peer into Maida's window. "I get the impression you're flooded." He had very blue eyes, a nice smile, and silver hair that fell over one brow.

"Alas," she said. "Yes. It's chronic."

"May I see if I can help?"

"Thank you," Maida said, "but all it takes is a few minutes of silent prayer."

"Well, I'll wait with you, if you don't mind, to make sure you can get going."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Together they surveyed the horizon, by now lurid, the sun a thin crimson arc sinking into a flood of darkening purple.

Maida said, "There's something so bleak and lonely about the seascape this time of day."

" 'I shall go back again to the bleak shore,' " the man quoted in a pleasantly deep voice, " 'And build a little shanty upon the sand.' "

" 'In such a way that the extremest band/Of brittle seaweed shall escape my door/But by a yard or two; and nevermore/Shall I return to take you by the hand.' "

"Ah, a fellow lover of the divine Millay."

Both smiled. It was a pleasant moment. Slowly the sun sank.

On their way home, safety belts buckled, Maida and Timothy were silent. Maida wondered suddenly where the girl on the beach had parked her car. But no need to make a mystery of that. No doubt there were hidden access paths along the entire coast. That would explain her evident lack of concern about the rising tide. Anyway, the whole thing could be forgotten now. She breathed deeply, feeling the tension in her chest begin to relax.

"Mama," Timothy said in a sudden, urgent voice, "that lady back there at our rock?" She nodded. "Well, there wasn't really anybody there, was there? You didn't really see a lady?"

Maida braked, pulled off the road into a blackberry thicket, and bent her forehead onto the wheel.

After a minute he asked, "Hey, why are we parking here?" and hopefully, "Are you going to throw up?"

About that she could not be quite sure.

She thought of long red-gold hair in the ocean blackness, streaming like kelp around the offshore rocks. She thought of herself and Timothy, watched like birds, bearing home their terrible knowledge. And she wondered where the two of them would be now if either had spoken.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a ***NEW*** short story by

JEFFRY SCOTT and RICHARD SIMPSON

Morgan Busby is a very different type than the Morgan played by David Warner in Karel Reisz's 1966 film, but he, too, has a lesson to learn about giving in to the urge to play games. Ruining the day of a deeply ambitious rival can be a dangerous venture not worth the momentary fun . . .

THEY *WILL* DO IT

by JEFFRY SCOTT and RICHARD SIMPSON

It starts with Morgan Busby needing a woman . . . But relax, it isn't that kind of tale—no multiple-X rating required, catastrophic but hardly steamy. Morgan Busby was a decent, even stuffy young fellow who'd been saving himself for the right girl.

Except that a year before Morgan landed in more trouble than he'd ever dreamed could exist, the right girl married somebody else. They *will* do it.

Morgan's Victorian great-grampa would have stormed off to Africa and shot big game until the pitying whispers and unpitying sniggers died. But Morgan lacked the passport, fare, and spare time for that. Besides, loud noises gave him migraines. So he left his home town and got a new job in London.

Dewy Dimple Cosmetics did him a power of good. Wanting to forget, he turned into a workaholic—compulsive, committed, tunnel-visioned, and dangerously close to being a bit of a pain. Dewy Dimple liked that in junior executives.

Herbert Knoffle hated it, naturally. Knoffle was a nasty little toad, not a bit of a pain but the whole thing, complete in itself. Until Morgan Busby arrived, Herbert Knoffle had been set for great things. Well, pretty piffling things since we're talking middle man-

© *1987 by Jeffry Scott and Richard Simpson.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

agement in an obscure company, but it depends where you are standing.

No fool, Morgan Busby understood what was going on. He was too glad about his jilting-accelerated career to feel very sorry for Knoffle. In any case, Knoffle was a creep and know-all of deepest dye, and if anyone had to be zipped past in the final furlong it couldn't happen to a more deserving candidate.

Then one morning Herbert Knoffle waddled over to Morg's desk and gloated, "I always assumed you were a married man, Busby. What a shame you're a bachelor, eh?" And then he explained, with relish, about Everton Donkin's prejudice.

Everton Donkin was rather like a particularly horrible ghost. Morg Busby had never seen him, but he believed in him and feared him. Everton Donkin was Dewy Dimple Cosmetics' founder, supreme being, and feudal overlord. The old brute was notoriously tetchy, and despite evident business expertise either seriously eccentric or barking mad.

Mr. Donkin had married young enough to have celebrated his half century with a Silver Wedding, which helped to account for his deep distrust of men who didn't get wed soon after commencing to shave. "No promotion for you," Herbert Knoffle chortled, "the Old Man's more likely to fire you when he finds out your marital status."

Morg gaped at his tormenter. If this was true, and he sensed that it was, then it certainly couldn't be fair. Stephanie Carewe, marketing executive, caught his eye and pulled a sympathetic face, so it *was* true. In an office with more than its rightful share of pains and nerds, Stephanie was a blessing.

Morg was a very serious young man, and when it comes to workmanlike, painstaking, intricate folly, they can be the worst kind. Now he proved it by putting on a surprised expression and saying, "What on earth makes you think I'm not married, Knoffers?" Listening to himself in awe and dismay, he went on to say that his wife Anne was still living near Bristol, looking after an ailing, widowed mother and an even frailer maiden aunt. Morg spent every weekend with Mrs. Busby and missed her terribly during the week.

"Oh," sighed Knoffle, suddenly a squashed and gloomy toad. His thoughts could be read. Imprecations aside, they went, Scratch Herbert Knoffle, insert Morgan Busby for the next major promotion.

Morg pretended to be absorbed in a file. He was reflecting that for a card-carrying truth teller, when he did lie, they tended to be lulus. The implications of the lie hadn't struck him. Stephanie Car-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ewe, head on one side, gave him a thoughtful look and murmured, "I can't wait to meet the lady."

He smiled wanly. If Ms. Carewe had wanted to warn him of potential ambushes down the road, she couldn't have done better. But instead Morgan Busby assured himself, feeling thoroughly ashamed, that good old Steph had been taken in, hence her comment.

Morg Busby's woman was tenuous to a fault—thin, one might say—but she hadn't sprung out of totally thin air.

Junk mailers always get their man, and more often than not they get them wrong. Within days of moving into his one-bedroom flat in leafy, exotic North Kensington, Morg began to be attacked by a torrent of unsolicited letters, and each and every solicitation was addressed to Mr. and Mrs. M. Busby. This had not helped M. Busby forget his lost love. It's an ill wind, though, and Morg took to leaving empty envelopes on his desk, and once, printed-side-up, in Herbert Knoffle's virgin wastebasket first thing in the morning. Guaranteed to ruin the jerk's day.

Childish, certainly, but joyously effective. Knoffle had given our hero a hard time in his early days at Dewy Dimple, so the temptation to torment him in return was overwhelming. There was also that paradoxical element making the most honorable person hotly maintain and defend even—perhaps especially—their rare and brazen falsehoods.

But day-ruining against a deeply amibitious rival can be a dangerous game. Morg learned that when the caretaker of his apartment block confided, "Bloke bin 'ere, yer juss mistim, was askin' fer yer Missus." Morg reminded himself how to breathe while shaken by the nightmare concept that the imaginary Mrs. Busby had materialized, been conjured up, complete with a wide circle of friends. Gulping, he managed to stutter, "Who was it who was asking for her?"

The caretaker frowned and narrowed his eyes. "A bloke. Never fought to askiz nyme. Little bloke ee iz, looks liker toad wivver 'at on. Ringer bell?"

Alarm bells. *Herbert Knoffle.* Suspicious, skeptical, snooping.

Spine chilly, palms moist, Morg mused, Let me get a divorce, get me out of this, and I'll never tell another one.

Next day he slipped away from the office during the lunch hour and hit the nearest department store, daring floors and counters

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hitherto alien to him. He bought a bra and briefs and tights—black lacy ones, *puce* ones, truly vile stale-mustard-yellow ones. It was a three-costing-one offer, he was saving money, what the heck.

Doggedly, blushingly methodical, he bought perfume in a cute sprayer gadget and moved on to cosmetics.

"Bad choice, Morgan," said Stephanie Carewe, exposing him to cardiac arrest by popping up on his blind side and speaking directly into his ear. She twitched the lipstick from between his fingers, slotted it back into the display case, and dropped another into his palm. "You were telling Nasty Knoffle the other day Anne's a blonde. That other shade is out of the question for anyone fair-skinned. Check it out with her next time you're in Bristol."

"Are you following me?" Morg demanded shakily.

Stephanie, unruffled, responded, "I practically live in this store, dummy. Fieldwork. We sell cosmetics, remember? Here's where they get bought. Stop looking furtive, Morgan, it doesn't suit you. A husband has every right to buy presents for his wife."

There was something worrying about her smile. Stephanie might be—indeed, was—delightfully pixieish, but Morg would have preferred a less *knowing*, sardonic pixie.

"I'd better be getting back," he mumbled.

"You'd better be doing something," she agreed cryptically, but Morg had already fled.

Herbert Knoffle was startled by Morg's yelped, "Don't sit down!" Morg twitched a bra from beneath the armchair's cushion. "Okay, now you can sit. Anne was here last weekend and tidiness isn't her strong suit."

He tossed the bra through the bedroom door, left ajar to disclose crumpled tights on the carpet. "Nice of you to drop in like this," he chattered, "but you caught me unaware, haven't done my chores."

Knoffle, a transparently inquisitive toad, squatted on his lily pad—no, *chair*—eyes busy, nostrils flared. He sneezed and remarked crossly, "Lord, what a pong!" Then he shrank in alarm as Morg leaned over him and replied, "Present Passion."

"Don't mess about," Knoffle whined.

"It's scent, Knoffers, my child bride's scent. It's called Present Passion. She *does* rather lay it on."

They stared at each other. Knoffle wasn't a poker player, but then neither was Morgan. Knoffle's lipless mouth widened in a grin so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gleefully extensive Morg half expected the little horror's chin to fall off.

"Good try, Busby, but there's no prize for near misses," Knoffle jeered. "You're finished, my friend, a past-tense threat. I advise you to resign before you're fired in disgrace. There is no Mrs. Anne Busby. 'Are you now or have you ever been a genuinely married man?' No, you haven't. She's a pack of lies, your wife."

"Prove it," Morg snapped.

Herbert was about to answer, but then he stopped, eyes clouding in thought. "Maybe I will, old man. Point of fact, I'm bloody certain I will. In my own time and in my own way. You're about to have a most interesting life, Busby."

He nearly hugged himself as he got to his feet. "You're quite clever, in a bovine, country-cousin fashion. But when you lost your head the other day and invented a wife off the top of it, your fate was sealed. You see, I wasn't kidding about Everton Donkin insisting on his executives being married. He hates bachelors, probably resents the freedom *he* never had.

"But there's one type of employee he hates even more. A liar! Donkin can't *stand* proven, barefaced liars!"

After the threat came the sinister lull. Morgan, nervous, abstracted, went through the motions of working normally. Herbert, in the style of midnight-movie savages, was quiet—too damned quiet.

Or had it all been a bluff? It was pretty silly, reviewed in daylight. Morg hadn't—or so he argued without conviction—made a flat-out false claim to Dewy Dimple Cosmetics' presiding tyrant. A wife had not been mentioned, on either side, during his recruitment interview with the personnel manager. He had left his marital status open on the forms filled in when the company hired him.

He hadn't actually *lied*, Morg lied. He had pulled Knoffle's leg, that was all. Of course, bystanders had been hoaxed along with the target but that wasn't Morgan's fault, they shouldn't have been eavesdropping.

Surely Knoffle wasn't toad enough to denounce him to Everton Donkin? Morg wished he hadn't asked the question. Yet even for Herbert Knoffle, it would take nerve. "Please, Mr. Donkin sir, that wicked Morgan Busby says he's married when I know he's nothing of the kind." With luck, Everton Donkin hated sneaks and rat-finks as much as liars.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The longer Morg chewed it over, the more he felt heartened at the conviction that Knoffers was checkmated. But Morgan, any sane outsider would conclude, was indulging in the classic error of underrating the foe.

Checkmated! Herbert Knoffle, The Man Who Walked Like a Toad, had hardly started to deploy the pawns.

The crucial pawn put a heavy hand on Morgan's shoulder as he fumbled the key into the front door of his flat. "Excuse me, sir, I believe you may be able to assist my inquiries. Detective Sergeant Shannon, from Pratt Street police station."

Shannon was large for a pawn, and wide with it. "Uh?" was Morg's intelligent, incisive riposte.

"In connection," said Shannon, "with a disturbance on or about these premises last night."

"Last night? I didn't get in until three, four in the morning. I drove down to Essex on business and some clown had put sugar in the petrol tank, probably before I left London. The garage said it could take an hour or more to clog the fuel system. Anyway, I spent a delightful evening on the side of the road and a delightful night waiting for it to be fixed."

He got the door open and Sergeant Shannon pressed inside behind him. "Anyone witness your late return home, sir?"

Morg dropped wearily into a chair. "They were all asleep. The lights were out all over the block, anyway."

Shannon nodded impatiently, with a nasty They-all-say-that smirk. "Now that we've introduced ourselves," he said, "maybe I can meet the charming Mrs. Busby." He checked his notebook. "Mrs. *Anne* Busby."

Morgan paled visibly, making Sergeant Shannon lean forward with a connoisseur's appreciation. "Are you," Morg demanded, "a pal of that twit Herbert Knoffle?"

"No," said Shannon, "and please don't change the subject: that being your wife, Mrs. Busby."

"Look—this is ridiculous, it'll *sound* ridiculous. Where the hell do I start? The thing is, there isn't any Mrs. Busby. She was only an, um, joke that got out of hand."

"Ah," the policeman remarked, "these jokes."

Morg worked on a comradely smile. "I wish I did have live-in, female company. It's just me here, on my ownsome, I'm afraid."

Sergeant Shannon sniffed, juicily, eloquently. "Air freshener, sir?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Little on the heavy side for my taste, not very butch. Hardly your macho rawhide or pine, now, is it?"

His smile curdling to ghastly, Morg admitted, "It's perfume. Part of the joke. I sprayed it on the curtains."

"As a lonely bachelor will," Shannon assented with mock understanding. "Makes perfect sense to me, sir."

Morgan, face red, tried to stand on his dignity. "What's this all about, anyway?"

"There was a disturbance here last night," Shannon explained. "Right here, in this flat. Or if not, just outside your window. And that's hardly likely, a cold winter night—two adults would hardly conduct a domestic argument at the tops of their voices out there."

The policeman waited for a comment. Morg waited for further bad news. Shannon resumed, "A number of tenants heard a man ranting and raving, indulging in unseemly language and threats." He consulted the notebook. " 'I'll kill you, you morally unsound bitch,' " he quoted. "Then he got really nasty. Abusive. There was high-pitched screaming, the sound of a blow. This morning, the caretaker found a bloodstained garment of the lingerie persuasion on the path directly outside your bedroom window, Mr. Busby. It is presently being examined by the forensic laboratory and I expect their report before midnight."

He passed Morgan a Polaroid photograph of what seemed to be chorus girl's undies, grimly gory. Tacky underwear, anyway, Morg thought, Anne would never—stop that, idiot! "I wasn't here," he repeated.

"There's more," Sergeant Shannon persisted. "This morning we had an anonymous phone call from a member of the public who was parked over there on the overpass. He had a good if distant view of your flat's windows, Mr. Busby. He saw a man and a woman struggling, saw the man hit her savagely and repeatedly. It took him a long time to contact us because he was parked up there with another man's wife—they didn't want to get involved."

Morg scoffed, "I know who your anonymous tipster is, Sergeant. It's all rubbish. I wasn't here last night—the apartment was empty, uninhabited. I live alone. No wife, no mistress, no nothing."

"I am told differently. Your colleagues at work believe you are married. You've told them so. Mail arrives regularly for the pair of you. The caretaker recollects Mrs. Busby having a visitor recently. Where is your wife, sir?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"She doesn't exist, Sergeant! Mrs. Busby *non est*! I made her up, it was a joke."

Shannon said, "A bit too deep for me, your undergraduate humor. Let's see if I can get in the right spirit." Playful as a rogue elephant, his tone turned arch. "If I was to search this flat, just for a laugh, you're saying I would find no evidence whatsoever of female occupancy?"

"Ah," said Morg, stricken. "Well. Yes, the bra and tights and so forth, I did buy them. But that was only to prove to this twat Herbert Knoffers—your anonymous spotter—that I wasn't lying, I *did* have a wife."

Shannon's forehead corrugated. "Hang on, I've lost my place. You don't have a wife, isn't that where we'd got to?"

"Right! But Knoffle had to believe I *did*. Check with the Public Records Office—there is no Mrs. Anne Busby!"

Unimpressed, the policeman agreed, "No Mrs. Busby—just her perfume, and, by your own admission, her clothing."

A panic-stricken corner of Morgan's mind supplied the perfect explanation for that. His sensible side trashed the alibi instantly and, unfortunately, out loud. "I am *not* a transvestite!" he exclaimed.

Nonplussed for only an instant, Shannon said soothingly, "Does you great credit, sir, I'm sure. But just because you're straight, it doesn't give you free license to do your poor wife a mischief."

"She doesn't exist, you blockhead! Not because I polished her off, because she's imaginary! Forget the perfume and clothes, forget the letters addressed to her, forget what those dolts at the office told you—" Morgan's voice trailed away. Sergeant Shannon had been to Dewy Dimple asking questions. No wonder they'd been avoiding him all day. No wonder Knoffle had been whistling and strutting.

Morgan put his head in his hands. He was ruined. Prove the nonexistence of Anne Busby and he branded himself a lying hoaxer. *Fail* to prove it— He peeked through his fingers at the brooding Shannon. Who perked up and suggested cozily, "Get it off your chest, son. Tell me where she's buried and you'll feel ever so much better. —What's more, capital punishment's a thing of the past and many of my clients assure me prison has been given a very bad press. It can be a most interesting and enriching experience for a bright young chap like yourself."

"Go away," Morg entreated. But more pithily.

Sergeant Shannon, disappointed and offended, conceded, "I'll leave

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you to mull things over, sir. But I'll be back sooner than you expect, with the forensic report. Then maybe you'll see sense and confess."

Sunk in apathy and gloom, dimly aware of a draft from the corridor where Shannon had left the front door ajar, Morgan started to become prey to hallucinations. Such as the urgent voice of Stephanie Carewe commanding, "Don't just sit there, get undressed!"

Glancing up, he saw that she really was there, really telling him to get undressed. Moreover, she was tugging her sweater over her head, muffling the order, so evidently it was supposed to be a joint venture. She darted past him into the bedroom.

He followed. "What do you think you're doing?"

Balanced on one leg as she peeled off her jeans, Stephanie said, "I'm going to bed, of course. You'd better step lively and join me or my whole plan is going to look pretty sick. Come *on*, Morgan, Sergeant Shannon could be back any minute."

She wriggled under the duvet, fluffed her hair, and folded her arms. "Morgan, stop the goldfish impressions—get your trousers off at least. You've made your point, dear, you don't go this far on the first date. I'm trying to save your stupid neck—*so get into bed.*"

Morg kicked off his shoes.

"It's a start," Ms. Carewe applauded.

"What's going on, what am I doing?" Morg asked himself.

Stephanie answered. "Shannon was at Dewy Dimple before you got in this morning and it's all around the office that you and your wife had a violent row and she vanished. Now, I have an edge on Sergeant Shannon in the Sherlock Holmes ballpark, because I *know* you've been lying your head off and your legendary wife doesn't exist."

Morgan should have been delighted, but he glared at her. "How do you know?"

Stephanie looked, in turn, surprised at his slowness to catch on, then defiant. "Because I'm besotted with you, dummy—I look at you every chance I can and I know you like a book. You're a bit dim, work aside, and you'll need any amount of care and attention—but married you ain't, not nohow. Thank goodness.

"But that's not the point. The sergeant will return. We will be in bed. He will catch us. We will explain that your absurd but touching chivalry made you invent Mrs. Busby to cloak our illicit, live-in affair."

Morg removed his jacket, started on the tie. "It might work."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Of course it will, My plans always do." Stephanie flipped the duvet. "Come on in, the water's fine."

Gingerly, he slid in beside her. "How long have we been an item, Steph? In case Shannon asks—"

"Months," she told him complacently. "I should have more sense, trap you into marriage, but you're a magnificent, untamed animal, you sweep all my reservations away."

"Steady on, we hardly know each other. Socially, that is."

Ms. Carewe's answer was to snuggle closer, and Morgan had to admit she was a grand little snuggler. When they'd both established this, she prompted, "It might be more convincing to turn the light out, Morgan. Just for the look of the thing."

Minutes passed. Hours. Sergeant Shannon did not return. Toward midnight, Morgan Busby locked the front door. Stephanie Carewe never did go home.

"I'd love to marry you," Stephanie assented the following evening when they met outside the office, "but wouldn't it be bigamy?"

Morg, arm round her waist, shook his head. "Tomorrow I'll explain it was all a long, involved in-joke between Herbert Knoffle and me—and Knoffers will back that up. Because he's a scholar and a gentleman as well as toad look-alike, but mainly because I aimed Sergeant Shannon at him, like a blunderbuss."

"What?"

"Sergeant Shannon phoned me this afternoon. He never came back because the forensic report made it plain that the undies found outside my window had never been on a human body and the blood came from a guinea pig. Shannon is not a happy copper. He says I'm the victim of a silly prank by somebody who has wasted police time and if he ever finds out who it was—"

Stephanie laughed.

"Now, come to dinner and help a widower celebrate," said Morgan Busby.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

WILLIAM BANKIER

Curtiss pointed to a scattering of rocks like a thick finger probing the beach from the sea. "In those rocks are tidal pools, depressions that stay filled up with water after the tide goes out. They're fun to look at. They've got all kinds of things living in them. Cockles and anemones. —Did you hear about the marine biologist who was his own worst anemone . . . ?"

OIL AND WATER

by WILLIAM BANKIER

It was Stacey Berenson's first anniversary and he should have been feeling happier. Exactly one year ago his divorce had come through, setting him free from a kind of slavery. And what was he doing today? Easing his Mercedes out of the Television City parking lot, as always, and into the dense traffic on Fairfax Avenue. Another episode of *One More Time* was in the can. The grapevine was saying the situation comedy had been renewed. This made the cast jubilant, but for Berenson, its producer, it meant another season stretched on the rack of boredom.

He forced the classy car into the flow of traffic ahead of a delivery van. But there was no joy here either, because a hundred yards ahead, at the corner of Beverly Boulevard, the lane was halted by somebody with an overheated engine. This gave the van driver his opportunity. He put his head out of the window and began addressing Berenson as if he was a caged dwarf. "Hey! Pea-brain! Drive much? Who let you out?"

The television producer kept eyes front. Physical courage had never been his specialty. Certainly not in conflict with a specimen who overflowed the cab of his vehicle.

© *1987 by William Bankier.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Hey! You deaf up there? I'm tockin to *you!*"

The Mercedes was halted beside a bus stop. There was a bench under the shelter and a man on it. He got up now and left the sidewalk and approached the van. He hung his face as close as he could. "Hey!" he yelled in a voice that turned heads on both sides of the street. "I'll give you hey! Horses eat hay! You look like a horse—but not the end that eats!"

"Get odda here, you old creep."

This was a fair description. Riding to Berenson's resuce had come not Sir Lancelot but a California version of Don Quixote. He appeared to be in his sixties, grey hair sparse on a weathered skull. The face had not been washed or shaved in days. His clothes—sports jacket, canvas pants, training shoes—must have once belonged to a larger person. But his anger was his own and it was splendid to see and hear. "You're a menace! Look at that heap you're driving! When were the brakes tested?"

"Get odda here." But the bully was running out of power.

"We need a cop. Anybody got a cop? Police!" The cry for help went unheard because cops hate rush hour and stay out of it as much as they can. "I think I'll get you busted. What are you carrying back there?"

Traffic showed signs of moving. The old man noticed and loped ahead to address the other driver. "He won't bother you now."

"Thanks, old timer." Berenson regretted using the term. The old timer's eyes revealed he did not consider himself an old timer. Wanting to repair the damage, Berenson thought of offering money. But that might only insult the man further, although he did look like a panhandler. "Can I give you a lift somewhere?"

"Thanks! Just let me grab my fiddle."

Fiddle? It was true. There was a violin and a bow lying on the bench on top of a plastic bag. The old man grabbed everything, slung his joints back on the road, and let himself into the waiting car. The lane began to move and they were off.

"This is great, Mr. Berenson. You can take me to my sister's place."

"You know my name?"

"Saw your picture in the *Times* last winter. The article about why there isn't any decent jazz on television."

"Bring back those good old days," Berenson said fervently. Ten years had flickered across the screen since he had produced the Emmy Award-winning special out of New York. That was where he met his wife. Now she was cut loose, possessor of the house in Pacific

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Palisades, where she was living happily (if appearances could be believed) with an old buddy of Berenson's from back home in Baytown. It was a ridiculous game, with no clear-cut winner, but, according to his experience, that was life.

"You owe me a name."

"Norman," the suntanned scarecrow said. "Curtiss K. Norman. Ignore the K. My parents christened me Kay because that was my mother's maiden name. They never bothered to consider they were giving their son a girl's name. So I had to do a lot of fighting when I was a kid to rectify their foolishness. When I could, I changed my name to Curtiss. It's legal. Named myself after the best model airplane I ever built—the Curtiss P-40! Kept the K as my middle initial and a memorial to my parents' insensitivity."

"Wait a minute, I've seen you before." As the story was unfolding, Berenson's mind had produced a recollection of some videotape being edited for a news features program. Curtiss K. Norman was the subject. Balancing, apparently, on the fine line between sanity and madness, he played his violin at bus stops. "You were on Channel 4. They call you the Pasadena Paganini."

"I hate that name. I've never even been to Pasadena."

"They treated it as if you were a nut case. You don't appear crazy to me."

"It's an act. I do this to get noticed. That's why I chose the bench beside Television City. The news feature was just the beginning. I'll land myself a whole program someday."

Berenson was feeling some unaccustomed exhilaration. The threatening van had driven away in another direction, so he was well and truly saved. "Where can I drop you, Curtiss?"

"My sister Freda lives on San Vicente below Sunset. You two are going to like each other. She's a jazz fan. She'll play you some fantastic tapes."

"I'm not sure I can come in." The only place Berenson had to go was a series of bars. He didn't consider himself an alcoholic because he was able to do his work. But a day in his life without alcohol was like a parade without bands.

"Just for a minute. You'll like Freda." Curtiss Norman gave the driver a calculating glance. "I'm no Good Samaritan," he said. "I put myself on the line back there because I recognized you. I figured knowing you would do me no harm."

"Okay." Berenson was nodding as he swung left onto Melrose, speeding west toward San Vicente. "That's okay," he said tolerantly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm working for me," the fiddler said. "Are you working for you?"

"Yes, I have to admit it," Stacey Berenson said. "All my life I've been working for me."

"My sister exaggerates," Curtiss K. Norman said. "When Freda says she wishes somebody would murder her husband, she means it would please her if he got in a bad accident."

"My brother puts words in my mouth," Freda said. "What I really mean is I wish somebody would boil Ross Campbell in some of the oil that made him rich."

"I'm surprised you tolerate *me,*" Berenson said. He was tucked into a deep chair in a murky room with a tall glass of beer in his hand. Having been on the hard stuff for years, he had forgotten how good beer went down. Especially with concealed speakers emitting the shimmer and swing of The Quintet of The Hot Club of France. "I'm an escaped husband, too."

"But that's not a problem," Freda said. "You went through a proper divorce, so your wife knows where she's at. Not me. Campbell hangs out at Laguna Beach, playing the part of the semi-retired baron. He knows I can't stand it out of L.A. so he's safe there. Most of the time he isn't even at his place when I telephone. He's across at the beach house with that doper artist Makepeace and the Lieberman woman."

"Bethany Lieberman lives with Jacko Makepeace," Curtiss explained. "They've been lovers for years." Berenson's new friend went on providing an interpretation of everything said by his volatile sister. "Ross met her when she came around selling Makepeace's paintings to decorate company offices. He bought a couple of abstracts for the lobby."

"He bought *her*," Freda said. "The paintings are no big deal. Ross Campbell has an illness. The falling sickness. He falls in love with every other woman he meets. Senile old fool."

"Ross has all his marbles," Curtiss said.

"She's after his money. Once she gets him to change his will, the Lieberman lady will drown the pathetic old crock in the Pacific."

"Freda makes the situation down there in Laguna sound like a bomb waiting to go off." Curtiss was changing tapes. Django was finished and now they began to get some early Stan Kenton. Symphonic reeds wailed while ferocious trombones punched holes in the night. "Bethany and Jacko are just a nice young couple living in a beach cottage with their patron Campbell as an occasional visitor."

"My brother, the space cadet," Freda announced with affection.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He woke up the other morning and smelled the coffee and thought the house was on fire."

Late in the evening, they all piled into Berenson's car and drove to Barney's, where they ate bowls of chili and cheddar and drank more beer. A pool table came free and they spent half an hour knocking the balls around with supreme delight and not much skill. Berenson realized through the beer haze that he was having the sort of fun he had not experienced since the good old days in Baytown. These people had nothing to do with TV production. He was with them because he liked them. "Hey, Curtiss P-40, you shoot pool like I shoot pool."

"What I need," Freda said, "is one of you to shoot Ross Campbell."

Curtiss said, "My sister has a one-track mind. She thinks in mono."

"What if I make you an offer you can't refuse?"

"Shut up and make the 8-ball."

The idea to drive down the coast to Laguna Beach acquired life at about one o'clock in the morning. They were back at Freda's house on San Vicente, listening now to a record of Louie Bellson's new band playing something that had sea-chantey overtones. "Those musicians have a lot of pride," Berenson said. "The Philharmonic isn't rehearsed any better than that."

"How do you live with yourself?" Freda asked. The question seemed to come out of left field but Berenson knew it was dead on target.

"Bored to death these days."

"With respect, that situation comedy you're doing is not great."

"It's what the sponsors want. The program doesn't get in the way of the commercials."

"Does your conscience get in the way of your sleep?"

"You got it," Berenson said. He made a bit of noise setting down his glass. He was entering the phase of ill-tempered drunk.

"You should get back into jazz."

He thought she meant the TV special that had brought him his award. "Can't turn back the clock."

"I mean a festival. Why don't you get involved with the Laguna Beach Jazz Festival?"

"Didn't know they have one."

"They don't. So why don't we start one? You could organize and promote it." She watched his eyes for signs of life. "Full-time job,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Berenson. On the phone to the top players on both coasts. Two weeks of great music out of doors in a setting so beautiful you could weep. The other fifty getting ready for next year."

"Money," Berenson said. "Jazz costs."

"That's why we keep a millionaire. Campbell has enough money hidden in Lichtenstein to pay for ten festivals. And more in Switzerland and the Bahamas."

"I'm intrigued. I'll think about it."

Freda said, "This is a drunken idea, right? Drunken ideas demand immediate action."

"Strike while the beer is cold," Curtiss said.

"How far is Laguna Beach? Two hours on the freeway this time of night?" She was serious. "We can breakfast on the road and be there when the sun comes up. Answer me, Mr. Berenson, sir. Have you ever seen a sunrise at Laguna Beach?"

For years he had been bitching that everything happening in his professional life was as predictable as a laugh-track. Now here was something unexpected. It was zany, preposterous, ambitious. It might even be a little dangerous. "I've never seen one before," he said. "But the next time it happens, I intend to be there."

They gassed up with twenty dollars' worth of super unleaded and took off on the San Diego Freeway heading south. Berenson kept himself awake on the drive by complaining about the way his wife had cheated on him with his old buddy from Baytown. The story had a lot of inaccuracies in it. The buddy was really only a casual friend from high school days, a writer trying to get a novel finished and glad of free lodgings. As for cheating, Berenson was hardly ever home and when he did come by it was mostly to sleep and shower and change his clothes. His wife and the visiting Canadian were obviously spending time together. If it bothered Berenson, he never made any outward signs.

They stopped for breakfast at an all-night restaurant. Back in the car and on the home stretch, Freda said, "We're entering Stan Kenton country."

The big car rolled down a winding highway through spectacular hills to the sea. They emerged on a beach road with the town sleeping in its airy layout of shops and offices and homes half hidden on the hillsides. The sun had not risen yet but there was light in the sky. The tide was on its way out, the sand wet, low-level waves rolling in without much sound far down the beach.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Hang a right," Freda said. "Makepeace has his cottage on yonder headland."

"Ross might be at his own place," Curtiss said.

"And Guy Lombardo," Freda retorted, "might be a rock-and-roller."

As he approached a frame structure half surrounded by wind-shaped palms, the new sun illuminating its blue-shingle roof, Berenson said, "Are we going to be waking people up? Maybe we should give it another hour."

Freda said, "We're all grown-ups. I for one am ready to take my husband as I find him." The car stopped and she opened her door. "But out of deference to your sensibilities, Mr. Berenson, sir, I shall go in and prepare the ground while you and my retarded brother entertain each other out here."

Berenson was feeling hungover, fatigued, and disenchanted with Freda's behavior. "I don't need this half baked enterprise."

"Relax," Curtiss told him as his sister walked away. "Freda is a bit hyper these days."

"Freda can be a pain in the arm."

"Freda's just another word," Curtiss said, "for nothing left to lose."

The men sat in the car while the sun came up and the landscape pretended it had never been anything but daytime. They were looking down on the beach beyond the house where a rim of dark sand twenty feet from the water's edge bore testimony to the ebbing tide. Curtiss pointed to a scattering of rocks like a thick finger probing the beach from the sea. "In those rocks," he said, "are tidal pools, depressions that stay filled up with water after the tide goes out. They're fun to look at. They've got all kinds of things living in them. Cockles and anemones. —Did you hear about the marine biologist who was his own worst anemone?" The old man's eyes gleamed. "Can I be one of your gag writers?"

"Ask me when I'm not half dead." Berenson was tempted to switch on and drive away. Freda would be all right, she could stay here with her husband and his friends. He wanted to flee from this industrial-size drum of worms they were about to open.

The sound from the silent house was more of a muffled gasp than a scream. Freda came around the side of the building at a run. "He's dead!" She put her face in the open window. "In a deck chair on the patio!"

"Who?" Curtiss asked. "Jacko Makepeace?"

"No. Ross. Nobody else is around. I couldn't get in. What are we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

going to do?" After bad-mouthing her husband all evening, she now seemed genuinely shattered at finding him dead.

"Call the cops," Curtiss said.

"We can't."

"No, because you killed him, you crazy person. You got us down here for that reason. Where's a telephone?" Curtiss fought his way out of the car. "I'm not letting you involve me. I'm making a statement."

"Keep your voice down," Freda told him.

"The nearest house is a hundred yards away. You knew that. How did you kill him?" The old violin player was wild-eyed. "I didn't hear a gun. You must have hit him with something. Was he asleep in the chair?"

Regaining his composure, Berenson said, "Calm down, Curtiss. We'll get this straightened out. Why no police, Freda? You just found your husband's body, we can't walk away."

"He and I have been fighting for the past year. Makepeace doesn't like me, neither does the Lieberman woman. They'll talk. Damn it, I've got motive!"

"Still—" Berenson had seen something. There was a wet stain on Freda Campbell's skirt where it spanned her hip. By the dawn's early light, it looked like a smear of blood. "We better bring in the cops. Somebody may have seen us drive in. If we flee this place and they get my license number, I'll be stopped on the highway."

"Listen," Curtiss said sharply, "somebody's coming."

Footsteps approached in a half scramble up the rough slope from the beach. Two heads appeared, then emerged as a man and a woman. The man took the lead. "Who is it? Hey, Freda, good to see you." There was about 60 percent sincerity in the greeting. "Were you waiting long? Bethany and I were taking our dawn walk on the beach."

"Doesn't Ross get to walk on the beach?"

"Freda," Curtiss mumbled, "not now, for God's sake."

"We left him asleep," Bethany Lieberman said. She was a chunky young woman with black hair and penetrating Meditteranean eyes. Berenson saw what Jacko Makepeace saw in her. And what the late Ross Campbell had seen in her. And what the male population of Southern California must be seeing in her. "He sometimes joins us if he wakes up."

"He isn't waking up," Freda said, pursuing her cryptic approach.

"I think we have a problem," Berenson said. He introduced himself

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and explained the reason for the drive from L.A. This was easy—it was like being in a preproduction meeting. Then he said, "Freda was looking to see if you were home. She found her husband in a deck chair."

"That's where we left him," Makepeace said. The artist had done all he could to sully his appearance. He hadn't shaved in days, his jeans were paint-stained, his shirt had a hole in it. As a crowning absurdity, he wore a faded baseball cap with the peak dragged down in the back, Holden Caulfield style. Still, he came across as an attractive, energetic man.

"Campbell is dead," Berenson concluded.

"Oh, boy," Makepeace said. "I warned him about sleeping outside. There are some bad people in this area now. They'll break your head for twenty bucks."

Everybody followed the artist around the house. The patio was not large and the floor was concrete with most of the space protected by an overhang from the frame structure. The door behind the recliner chair in which Campbell lay wasn't locked. Makepeace flung it open and took an exploratory glance inside. Then he said, "Keep back, Bethany. This isn't very nice."

He was right. Somebody had altered forever the construction of the retired oil tycoon's skull with a blow or blows from a heavy object. It was time to bring in the police.

The investigating officer's name was Lopat. Nothing seemed to bother him. Despite the considerable amount of blood on Freda Campbell's skirt, he took her off the hook immediately. Confirming that her discovery of the body had taken place thirty minutes ago, he said, "These people can vouch for you before then? Okay. The M.E. will do his examination, but I can say right now the gentleman has been dead for at least a couple of hours. Did you move him?"

"I wanted to wake him. His head was turned the other way. When I tugged at him, I got blood on my hand and I wiped it—" Freda went silent. Talking about the tragedy was making it real.

"Have some coffee, Mrs. Campbell," the detective said. "Can somebody make coffee? Black for me. No sugar."

With his suspicion of Freda's guilt cleared away, Berenson could concentrate on what Makepeace had said earlier. They were all seated in the artist's studio with a clear view through glass of the fine day developing outside. An easel near the window supported

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his work in progress—a still life, oils on canvas, the subject being an arrangement of rocks and shells on a sand background.

Curtiss was on the prowl. He had been admiring a framed photograph on the mantel, carrying it across the room to show Berenson. It was a posed shot of a baseball team, the Laguna Beachers, and there stood Jacko Makepeace in the second row, identified in the caption as the center fielder. Now the old man was examining the oil painting.

What Makepeace had said to Berenson was something to the effect that bad people in the area would break your head for twenty dollars. But all Berenson had said was that Campbell was dead. It could have been a heart attack. He might have hanged himself. Why was Makepeace so quick to assume the man's head had been broken? Unless he had done it himself.

Berenson, with his own part in the questioning finished, wondered when and if he should volunteer this theory of his to the detective.

Lopat was concentrating on Bethany Lieberman. Calmly, he was pursuing his line of investigation. The deceased was her friend. Campbell was staying in the cottage at night to be near her. The wealthy oil magnate's arrival in Laguna Beach had not gone unnoticed. A lawyer friend of Lopat's had mentioned over lunch that he was drawing up a new will for Mr. Campbell. "I can find out about it if I have to," Lopat told her. "But you can save my time."

"I'm mentioned in the will, yes," Bethany said. "Ross had plenty of money. He wasn't cutting out his wife. He was just sharing the wealth."

"So if you and Mr. Makepeace needed money right now, this would be a way to get it."

"Lay off of Jacko," the woman said. "I'll give you motive! I was sick of the old man. He wouldn't go away. Okay, he thought I was clever, he bought a couple of Makepeaces from me. He seemed to think that gave him a season's ticket. Bad enough he moved down here from L.A. But every time we opened the door he was there with another bottle of champagne. I hate champagne."

"Let's hear it for the beer drinkers," the artist said. "Too early for a beer?" He answered his own question in a cheerful voice. "Of course not. Jacko, treat yourself to a beer." He went behind his easel and opened a small refrigerator.

"Don't mind if I do," Curtiss Norman said without being asked.

Serving him a beer, Makepeace responded to the old man's appraisal of his painting. "You like?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Fascinating," Curtiss said, comparing the half finished work with the layout of rocks and shells on a table beside it. "You captured this shell exactly."

Lopat said to Bethany, "Are you telling me you had a bad relationship with Campbell?"

"Yes. Before the neighbors tell you. Somebody will say he and I were screaming at each other late last night. He wanted to drive down to San Diego for a few days and I refused to go with him."

"But you didn't kill him."

"Would I be telling you this if I did?"

"You might," the detective said.

"Since this is confession time," Makepeace said, "you'd better hear *my* motive. I didn't kill him either, but I felt like it often enough. When the old pirate bought two paintings of mine for his head office building, do you know what he did? I couldn't believe the nerve of the man. He rang me up and wanted me to drive down to L.A. and make some changes. Bring my paints and do some alterations according to his specifications. I had to tell him, 'I'm not a tailor, Campbell—I don't alter my work to fit you.' "

Bethany was shaking her head. "You were mad that day."

"When was this?" Lopat was jotting in a notebook.

"Two years ago. He still felt free to come in here and advise me how to paint."

When the detective and his team had gone, taking the body with them, Freda got Berenson aside and suggested they proceed with the plan for the festival.

"Apparently Ross left something to her, but I should have all the money we'll need."

"This is not the time for new endeavors," Berenson said. "We owe the deceased at least one day before we start spending his estate."

"So what do we do?"

"Get in the car and drive."

"You look half dead. None of us is ready to get back on the freeway."

"Then a motel. Don't suggest sleeping here, I want out of here."

"You can't get out of here just yet."

"Why not?"

"My demented brother has disappeared." Freda thought this was typical. "Look around, where is he?"

While they were waiting for Curtiss to reappear, Bethany scrambled some eggs and made toast to go with a second pot of coffee.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Freda began to talk about the festival. Berenson, on the edge of sleep, opted out of her obsessive planning. Their hostess made polite noises. For two women who had shared the same man and now he was dead, perhaps at the hands of one of them, they were behaving well. Only Jacko Makepeace was able to find cause for dissent in what Freda was saying.

"We don't need some schlocky tourist attraction filling up the town with drunks," he said, polishing off his second beer.

"You've got it wrong," Freda said. "Jazz audiences are well behaved. They come for the music. And they patronize restaurants and hotels. They'd even be a market for your paintings."

"Book it in Los Angeles. I'll fight you if you try it here."

"Why are you so obnoxious?"

"You want the truth?" The artist turned to face the recent widow. "I never liked your husband. Now here *you* are. And every time I look at you, I think of him. Go home, Mrs. Campbell. Leave me in peace." Jacko grabbed up bottle and glass and left the room. "Everybody, get off my back!"

"It might be a good idea if you left us alone," Bethany said. "He hasn't been himself for a while."

"Gladly," Berenson murmured, "as soon as Curtiss shows up."

"He just showed up," Norman said, appearing in the doorway. "I've been down on the beach checking out the tidal pools."

"Find anything interesting?"

"Interesting enough to bring Inspector Lopat back here. Do you want to telephone him, Bethany, or shall I? He'd better get here before the tide comes in."

Curtiss refused to open up until the policeman arrived. He asked where Makepeace had gone. He accepted food and ate it with a nervous eye on the doorway. When Lopat returned twenty minutes later, the old violin player had a good story to tell. "Notice Jacko's work in progress," he said, going to it and using a ruler to point out features. "He's working according to this setup on the table. See? Everything compares perfectly—this big shell, these pebbles, the spread of sand. But look, one thing is missing. Look at the center of the painting—there's a large rock with an unusual shape, round at the end and with a long narrow part here. Looks something like a mallet. Where is it on the table? Not there."

Lopat smiled. "A stone in an oil painting is hardly evidence."

"How about a stone in a tidal pool? That's where it is. I noticed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it half an hour ago. One end of it is not immersed in the pool. What I saw on it looks like blood."

The detective went to the door. "Come and show me."

"It's the near pool," Curtis said, following Lopat outside. "Not a very difficult throw from here. The murderer must have believed it was going to fall into the ocean."

In the car on the way back to L.A., refreshed by an afternoon's motel rest, Berenson said, "Curtiss, you continue to amaze me. I've known you less than twenty-four hours, in which time you've rescued me from a truck driver, introduced me to your volatile sister who may set me up as a jazz impressario, and now you've pinned a killing on Jacko Makepeace. You actually identified the murder weapon from his oil painting."

Freda said, "Quite a surprise for him when he came back and the detective accused him. Vicious, violent man. But he confessed quickly enough when Lopat showed him the blood-stained rock."

"That was probably the only noble thing Makepeace has ever done," Curtiss said.

"What?"

"Taking the blame to protect Bethany. When he said he thought some stranger had come by and killed Campbell, he must really have believed it. But I won't let him get her off. When we get home, I'll telephone Lopat and set him straight."

"Curtiss, what are you talking about?"

"They both had the opportunity to kill Campbell. He fell asleep in the deck chair before they set out on their beach walk. Either of them could have made some excuse to go back to the cottage, take up the stone mallet, and clobber him. Their motives were similar. Bethany was sick of the old man as a companion and admirer, he wouldn't go away and leave her alone. Makepeace couldn't stand being told how to paint and Ross wouldn't stop advising him. The money waiting in his will was an incentive for the pair of them.

"Right," Freda said. "So how can you say it was Bethany and not Jacko who did the hitting?"

"Because of the throwing. Remember the framed photograph—Makepeace and the Laguna baseball team? He was the center fielder. To play out there, you have to be able to make the throw to home plate. QED. A girl must have lobbed that rock so it landed in the nearest tidal pool. If Makepeace had thrown it, it would have sank somewhere out near Hawaii."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Do you buy that, Freda?" Berenson asked.

"I would," she said, "except for one thing. Makepeace fed Curtiss beer, so he likes him. We have only my brother's word for it that the stone was found in the nearest pool. He could have moved it there from the farthest."

"Would Curtiss do a thing like that?"

"Is Oscar Peterson a piano player?"

"Pay no attention," Curtiss said. "She wants Makepeace in jail so there'll be nobody to oppose her jazz festival."

Berenson drove grimly for Los Angeles and home. He had started out with these two feeling sorry for himself. Now the situation had improved. He was feeling sorry for Inspector Lopat.

"Q"

DID YOU MISS A KEY ISSUE?

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

ELLERY QUEEN

LAST CHANCE TO UNLOCK MORE MYSTERIES IN ELLERY QUEEN
CHECK OFF TODAY THE ELLERY QUEEN BACK ISSUES THAT YOU'D LIKE, AND MAIL WITH YOUR CHECK OR MONEY ORDER. ORDERS TAKEN ON FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS. HURRY! LIMITED SUPPLY AVAILABLE.

ISSUES	$3.50 each
January 1986	☐
February 1986	☐
March 1986	☐
April 1986	☐
May 1986	☐
June 1986	☐
July 1986	☐
August 1986	☐
September 1986	☐
October 1986	☐
November 1986	☐
December 1986	☐
Mid-December 1986	☐

MAIL TO

ELLERY QUEEN
P.O. Box 40
Vernon, NJ
07462

☐ Enclosed is check or money order for $_____
(Cost includes postage and handling)
Make checks payable to ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Name _____

Street/No. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery

DQF7BK

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The six-inch-barreled Colt was a big weapon for most people but was in scale with the size of the man. The weapon felt good in his hand, but still a little frightening . . .

A HOT SUMMER NIGHT

by JOEL NEWMAN

The big black man wiped the sweat from his forehead with a stained handkerchief. He sat on the porch of his tiny wood-frame house on Imperial Highway and stared into the darkness. He didn't see the cars that whizzed and wheezed by, he didn't hear them. Instead he thought about his thirteen-year-old son.

His dead son.

His murdered son.

And the murderer had gone unpunished. The law—more specifically, the judge—had seen to that.

Where was the sense of it all, that a vicious murderer should go free? That a boy should be attacked in front of his own house, stabbed seven times, and bleed to death in front of his father? Where was the justice, that his killer should be caught and arrested and convicted of homicide—*convicted by a jury*—and then be released by the judge?

The headlights of the passing cars were like stars twinkling against the blackness of the sky. Except the nighttime Los Angeles skies were ruddy brown with smog and no stars could be seen past the veil of dirt.

Again the man mopped at his forehead with the handkerchief. He knew what he must do: for his son and any others like him. If the courts wouldn't stop the murderers, he would do it himself.

The Colt Python .357 Magnum was well oiled, well cared for. With the hammer resting on an empty chamber, there were only five Remington 158-grain jacketed hollow points in the revolver, but that would be enough.

The six-inch-barreled Colt was a big weapon for most people but was in scale with the size of the man. The weapon felt good in his

© 1987 by Joel Newman.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hand, but still a little frightening. He was, after all, sitting on the porch of his house in South Central Los Angeles waiting to kill a man—or several.

The anthracite-grey Mercedes-Benz sedan was cruising north on the Harbor Freeway, the driver returning from his newly acquired rental property in San Pedro. His destination was a sprawling four-bedroom house with a pool and tennis court in Bel-Air, in the west end of Los Angeles. The Benz was only two weeks old and the driver was proud of his new toy.

Ownership of a car with the three-pointed star on the hood no longer conferred exclusivity in Southern California—German cars were everywhere and sometimes it seemed that the entire output of Stuttgart was exported to L.A.—but still he was pleased. It was his first Mercedes after a lifetime of Cadillacs, a new one each year for longer than he cared to remember, but now he had embarked on a new course. He had lost weight, the hair implants were almost completed, and something hipper than another Fleetwood limousine was called for.

Already he had received compliments from the guys at CCB—and a very particular compliment from the new clerk, Melissa Lange, twenty years his junior and very attractive indeed. Young women seemed fatally drawn to German cars. Yes, buying the Mercedes had been the right thing to do.

Suddenly he realized he'd passed the spot where he should have left the Harbor Freeway and joined up with the 405. The purring of the air-conditioner had masked all sense of time and he had no idea how long he'd been traveling in the wrong direction. He felt as if he was in the middle of nowhere.

He couldn't believe people lived in the suburbs he was now passing through. Places like Gardena and Lawndale. Even the names sounded foolish. Gardena was where Bingo was legal. Imagine—all those high rollers playing Bingo.

The middle of nowhere. Maybe the best thing would be to get off at the next exit, then simply turn around and head back to the missed interchange. He left the freeway at El Segundo Boulevard, intending to swing around. He didn't like this neighborhood. The cars were old, beat up, just like the people. Everything and everyone was tired and broken.

Then an ancient Ford pickup truck headed toward him. He swerved to miss it. Even with the sound of the air-conditioner he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could make out angry voices from the truck, voices he'd rather not have heard. Not at night in this part of town.

He accelerated away from the narrowly averted accident and from those shiny black faces. If he could just get to the freeway entrance, he'd be long gone. But the truck had forced him to turn the wrong way, east instead of west, and he was headed right into the worst that Los Angeles had to offer.

There was the sound of an explosion!

He saw the pickup in his rearview mirror. There were two people in the back of the truck and one of them was waving his arms around like a wild man.

Then there was a second explosion as a beer bottle, thrown by the crazy in the truck, smashed against the asphalt. What should he do? The cellular car phone hadn't been installed yet, he was miles from any sort of civilized person, and those apes in the pickup were coming alongside.

Another beer bottle came sailing his way. It landed in front of the Mercedes, shattered, and one of the jagged pieces ripped open the front right tire. It went all at once. Riding on a flat, he'd never be able to outdistance them. The car was vibrating terribly. He swung the steering wheel around, just managing to make a corner.

The driver of the pickup—was he just drunk or was he also doing coke?—failed to make the turn.

He sighed with relief. Maybe he was safe now.

The man with the revolver sat patiently on his porch. The gang member who had killed his son had vowed to return.

The murderer was all of sixteen, and he had stood there in the courtroom and laughed when the judge threw out the jury's guilty verdict. Showing no fear, with the certain knowledge that those sworn to uphold the law would do nothing, he had promised that the man would die the way his son had died. The judge had banged his gavel for a few seconds, but other than that no officer of the court reacted to the threats. It seemed only the murderer felt free to speak his mind.

Sitting on the porch this hot summer evening, the man knew the threats had been genuine. He knew that the killer, perhaps accompanied by the rest of the gang, would be back.

Up ahead, the driver of the Mercedes saw an intersection with a traffic light. And the light was green! As quickly as the flat tire

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

allowed, he turned left onto Imperial Highway. It was a main thoroughfare, making him feel more secure, and he was heading west again, toward the freeway entrance.

He crossed a set of railway tracks. At this speed, the car seemed to be shaking apart. In front of him was another set of tracks, and then the freeway! He was going to make it. On the freeway he would stop at the first call box and notify the Highway Patrol.

But above the sound of the by now shredded tire and the mangled rim, there was a moronic hooting sound. He checked the rearview mirror. *The truck was back.*

The man on the porch heard a disturbance several blocks away. Screams that sounded more like war whoops. Squealing rubber. Breaking glass. And the *whap whap whap* of a flat tire. The screams and squeals were coming closer. He saw a large shiny car approach, a rusty old Ford truck in pursuit. The car was all over the street before it crashed into an empty bench by the bus stop.

A man emerged from the crumpled sedan—a small white man wearing a suit. What was he doing in this neighborhood? Didn't he know he could get killed in this place? He stumbled forward as the pickup truck veered toward him, trying to run him over. One of the drunks in the back of the truck fell out, landed on the street, and got up laughing. The truck came to a halt. The driver and the remaining passengers spilled out and began to chase their prey.

The man on the porch thought he recognized the fleeing man. But, no, that wasn't possible. The man in the suit was headed wildly down the street toward the wood-frame house. One of his tormentors called out a warning to his friends. "Don't go down there—it's old man Johnson! He's crazy! He's got himself a gun!"

They stopped, but the man kept running toward the house. He was too out of shape to go farther. He stopped on the sidewalk in front of the big black man. He didn't see the revolver. "Help me!" he said. "They're trying to kill me!"

"I'll do it for them," the man on the porch said—and fired the Colt five times.

The powerful strobes of two Los Angeles Police Department patrol cars and a Los Angeles Fire Department ambulance bathed the house and the porch in an unearthly red light. Not the kind of red that had oozed from his son's body, thought the man, and not like the crimson stains on the white dress-shirt of the man in the suit.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A ghostly, unreal, shimmering, transparent red—visible one moment, vanished the next.

"Funny thing," the plainclothes L.A.P.D. detective said as he stared at the body of the man in the suit. "His being around here, I mean. Not exactly his sort of neighborhood."

"I think I've seen this guy," the uniformed patrolman replied. He had been the first to respond to the call. "But not here. Somewhere else."

"It wouldn't be here. As I said, not his kind of neighborhood."

"*Now* I remember. It was downtown. At CCB."

"That's right," said the detective. "The Criminal Courts Building."

"You know him, too? Is he someone important? A lawyer?"

"Important?" The detective's eyes narrowed as he turned to the young patrolman. "Not any more he isn't. But there was a time." In the background, the police radios crackled to life. Another killing, another part of the city. Someone else's problem. "You see, Sergeant, I lost a couple of cases because of this guy. Remember the Movie Murderer? The serial killer who filmed his rape victims before beating them to death?"

The patrolman shook his head.

"Yeah, well, it's been a while. Before your time, I guess." The detective loosened his tie and took a deep breath of stale, smoggy air. "It took a lot of legwork and some good tips from an informant, but we tracked down this freak and arrested him." The paramedics had loaded the dead man onto a gurney, covered his face with a red blanket, and were wheeling him toward the ambulance. "And it was a righteous bust, too. No procedural errors that would allow a guilty verdict to be overturned on appeal. But *that bastard*"—he pointed at the body as it disappeared into the ambulance—"cut him free, claimed that even though we'd read off the Miranda there was some question the defendant hadn't understood his rights."

The ambulance doors slammed shut.

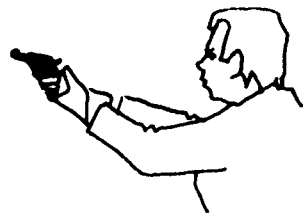
"He said the City of Los Angeles hadn't provided a minimally acceptable standard of education in the public schools and therefore the defendant didn't have a true understanding of his legal situation when he waived those rights. We did eventually nail the suspect, but not before he'd raped and beaten to death another woman."

The detective walked up to the man on the porch. "Mr. Johnson," he said to the man, "you've got nothing to worry about. It was obvious you felt your life was threatened and you acted in self-defense. We know you were threatened in court."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The ambulance drove off silently.

"It's late at night," the detective said. "You're sitting peacefully on your porch when a bunch of toughs confront you. You think it's the gang out for their promised revenge. You fire and kill one of them. You couldn't possibly have known it was a Los Angeles County judge you were shooting at. You couldn't have known it was the judge who freed your son's murderer. You couldn't have known that, could you, Mr. Johnson?"



DETECTIVERSE

HIT AND MISS

by ALICE RUDOSKI

The job was big—eight hundred grand.
He took his time—each step was planned.
He scaled the eight-foot concrete wall,
Slid down a rope to break the fall.
To reach the roof, three storeys high,
He climbed a tree that leaned close by.
He inched on ledges to the side
Where attic windows opened wide.
Inside the house, he crouched and crept
On hands and knees—he was adept.
He found the safe and knew that he
Could pry it open easily.
Then one small detail changed his mind—
He'd left his bag of tools behind.

© *1987 by Alice Rudoski.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Neil Hockaday story by

THOMAS ADCOCK

With this latest adventure, we learn much of interest about Neil Hockaday's attitudes and about a childhood acquaintance who took up a very different line of work from Hock's. We also meet the new woman in the SCUM Patrol detective's life . . .

CRACKER JACK

by THOMAS ADCOCK

Some mornings I wake up almost knowing I'm going to wind up on the far side. When you're a cop, that's the place where instinct tells you a fair number of occupational hazards are going to be dumped on your head like a load of wet snow off a time-weakened roof. But no matter what your game, you've reached the far side when you find yourself smack in the middle of the tightrope that stretches between all of your ignorance and all of your experience, when you learn in a flash that an honorable life is chiefly a matter of luck.

For instance, there was last Wednesday.

As usual, I started off with breakfast in the spoon downstairs from my East Village apartment, and as usual I was trying to make sense of the world with the help of *The Times*, which as usual wasn't much help. On the counter in front of me, set out in chipped blue-and-yellow china, was my usual eggs over easy, sausages, rye toast, and black coffee.

When I finished the mess, I left the usual buck for Wanda, the waitress and former snake-charmer at the late great Hubert's Flea Circus of Times Square. She stuffed the bill into her big mottled bosom and gave me the usual sendoff: "Thanks fer the swell tip,

© 1987 by Thomas Adcock

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

honeybuns, and let's see you nail one o' them Ten Most Wanted creeps t'day."

Thus fortified with usualness, I hit the street. And then the street hit me, in a manner of speaking.

"Outa my way, bub!"

This was shrieked at me by a very agitated heavy-hipped red-headed crone in a straw bonnet and a pink dress with cabbage roses all over it. She backed up what she had to say with a meaty right straight-arm to my Adam's apple, which just about decked me. So I stepped out of harm's way to see what her rush was all about.

What she was trying to do, it appeared, was catch up to a whip-skinny punk sauntering down the street toward First Avenue with the handbag he'd recently snatched off her shoulder. The crone was making plenty of good squawk, but nobody on the street besides me seemed to care about it, which didn't make it much of a sporting contest. The poor old thing with the mean right had too many years on her and entirely too much ballast. Well down the street now, the punk turned around and laughed at us both.

I went over and asked her what was up. She'd stopped and was catching her breath.

"Honest t'God," she said, "would ya lookit that li'l snot down there? He swiped my purse and my rent money inside it and my keys and the last of my Kaopectate. And it ain't nothin' but a joke to him—he's thinkin' he'll get clean away with it. He's prob'ly one o' them crack junkies. Where's a damn cop when ya need one!"

I didn't have the chance right then to introduce myself because just then the punk started coming back toward us. I suppose he *was* a crackhead. Dopers do crazy stuff like that.

"Now's my chance," the old lady said to me.

She waited until he was about a half block away, then she did something as amazing and exciting and dead-on gorgeous as anything I've seen speeding off Phil Neikro's knuckles back when he was on the mound up at Yankee Stadium and it's the bottom of the ninth with two away and he's got only one more pitch on a full count to shut out a Red Sox designated hitter in order to hang onto the Yanks' one-run lead.

Only she didn't use a baseball.

Instead, she plucked a glass eye from the left side of her head, went into something approximating a windup, and burned one-quarter pound of blue iris crystal straight on down the street, scoring a bull's-eye dead square on the laughing punk's nose. It burst into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

red like an exploding paint can—he wasn't laughing when he went down.

"C'mon, bub! Give a helpless ol' lady a hand, whyn'tcha."

Adrenaline got the helpless old lady to where the punk went down about the same time I got there myself to make a nice, sweet collar for aggravated robbery. I was reaching into my back pocket for the bracelets when she took a joyful little hop into the air and pounced onto the punk's chest, like I've seen wrestlers do it on television. "I'll sit here on the crumb-bum while ya go call up the coppers—okay, bub?"

She'd recovered her purse and was bashing it into the squashed punk's face. The glass eye rolled off the curb into a grating and disappeared into a sticky bog of used-up chewing gum, cigarette butts, spittle, and latex mementos of romantic revels. "Hell," she crowed, "the insurance is paid up full and I been wantin' a new one anyways."

That's when I figured it was time to show her my tin. Otherwise, I'd have to explain to some sergeant how I'd stood around while the alleged perpetrator was asphyxiated beneath the great hams of a fat lady madder than a confused cat in a bathtub full of ping-pong balls.

And like I said, I happen to know an omen when I see one. Especially when it slugs me on the neck on the street where I live.

So that Wednesday morning, I right away saw the signs of your classic trip through Door Number Three. Which, as most New York cops know, is a vast and strange world often contained in a surprisingly small room—so small that a Bryant Park skel known as "Cracker Jack" and my own girl friend Sandy could set up a fatally dangerous moment.

I guess you'd call Sandy my girl friend for lack of a more dignified expression. Or you could say that a lady like Sandy and a gent like me are currently slow-dancing together.

Sandy's a librarian by trade and, as you know, I'm a cop: Detective Neil Hockaday of the New York Police Department's Street Crimes Unit—Manhattan, more intimately known to those we serve as the SCUM Patrol, just as I'm more intimately known as Hock. Sandy and I hooked up not long after I started hanging out at the New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue, the big beaux-arts beauty with eighty-eight miles of book stacks, containing centuries of human thought and knowledge in hundreds of languages and dialects,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and a pair of stone lions on sentry duty out front named Patience and Fortitude.

Not that I'm a guy who always hangs out at tony places like that. When the law-and-order business goes sad and heavy, quite a lot of my brethren will take their breathers at what we call a "frat house," which is a type of New York saloon where the clientele is about ninety-nine percent sorrowful cops. A fouler rag-and-bone shop of the mind you'll never know. But it was the kind of place I went to until I realized how tired it was making me—not to mention how broke, since my monthly tab for Johnny Walker red and Molson chasers and microwaved pizza wedges began eclipsing the monthly alimony bite that is mine courtesy of a carnivorous ex-wife with court-sponsored teethmarks on my wallet until death do us part.

So I started drifting into the serenity of the library when I needed shelter from the storm at no charge. I knew and loved the place from when I was a kid shining shoes on Forty-second Street on Saturdays. That was the first time my experience taught me that New York means, among many things fair and otherwise, that anybody in the city is welcome at a great house of education and learning. Even an ignoramus shoeshine kid like I was then.

I would go to the marble palace at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second when my arms and back ached too much to slap another speck of polish on leather. Before heading upstairs to the Main Reading Room on three, I would have to check my wooden box full of wax and brushes and stained cheesecloths at the call desk, where a gentleman wearing a brown-cotton jacket would take it from me as if I'd passed over a fine Briggs umbrella and a Bond Street bowler. Then I would read for the next several hours, which was then and is now an act of priceless acquisition—and the single asset in which my ex has neither legal claim nor the simplest curiosity.

My own reverence for the library is horribly understated if you compare it to Sandy's. On our first date, which was dinner at my favorite neighborhood joint, Princess Pamela's Little Kitchen of Cool Jazz & Southern Cuisine on East Tenth Street, I came to know this. Sandy's theory of the library as sanctuary from the tedious dross of the mercantile world came tumbling forth and her talk excited me as much as looking at her chocolate-brown eyes and her straight black, shining hair and the way her smooth neck flowed out from the top of her summer white blouse. The lady is one female hunk.

"For more years than I'd care to say," she confessed, "I was your regulation Madison Avenue hotshot. I wore all the right lady MBA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

getups and spent hours lunching at table 89 in the pool room at the Four Seasons so that everybody in the advertising dodge could get a load of me in my executive splendor.

"I made plenty. I won't say 'earned.' Enough so that I had this place up on East Seventy-fourth with a terrace overlooking Central Park. I'd hire a piano player for parties out there on warm nights and he'd play Gershwin and Porter and I'd try to believe I loved my career and I was successful and all the people drinking my liquor were dear friends. But I didn't and I wasn't and they weren't."

I interrupted her. "A lot of people I know can't imagine much wrong with that picture."

She didn't bite my head off, she was graceful. "Yeah, I know. My mother, for instance. She refers to my ad career as 'the glamor job Sandra threw away like a pair of rotten socks.' People like my mother don't understand that I had to put up with an awful lot of grotesques for the money."

"What kind of grotesques?" I asked as Princess Pamela herself plopped down two enormous plates full of fried chicken, collard greens, yams and raisins, potato salad, and cornbread. Princess gave me an unfriendly look and departed.

"Well," Sandy continued, "like the monosyllabic copywriter whose hobbies were his hair and leather pants. He was a vice president, naturally. Then there were the clients—corporate geeks who were actually interested in the slop they were selling to Susie Homemaker and Joe Sixpack. All I ever had to say was how excited I was about all the tremendous challenges ahead, or something smarmy like that, and they'd be grinning and signing the contract.

"So one fine day I just got up from behind my big shiny desk in my big shiny corner office with windows looking out over the East River clear down to the Brooklyn Bridge and I walked out and never went back." She shrugged. "And now you know my story."

At this point, Princess Pamela returned to our table to exercise the house custom of free advice and commentary on her eavesdroppings. She popped open a can of cold Bud she brought with her and let fly.

"Tell you what I think, darlin'. I think the important thing in life is to know crap from Christmas. For instance, you can be a lady who likes bein' taken uptown to the Helmsley for all that brass-and-glass jive, or you can be a lady who likes the Plaza, where you see somethin'. Or you're a lady who goes for croquet in the backyard, or one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who heads for the card table and the sun tea and a good hot game of whist."

Princess finished off the Bud with a long noisy swallow and a dainty belch, then she moved her ministry on to the next table.

"I like her a lot, Hock," Sandy said, looking after her. "She talks like Hemingway said he tried to write. Which is to know everything there is to know about your subject and then toss it all out except for one or two essentials. He called it resonance. Princess would call it soul."

She folded her hands and tucked them under her chin and leaned forward across the table. I kissed her and the Little Kitchen jazz combo played "Old Devil Moon" and I believe that was the exact moment I decided that Sandy and I were what the late great Walter Winchell would call an "item."

"So how do you think of your life nowadays?" I asked her.

"Physically, I'm not so thrilled. I had to move from East Seventy-fourth and my place now is smaller than my old corner office at the agency, with a view of the river you'll never see on a postcard. My salary at the library is exactly one-seventh what it used to be. On the other hand, I'm working somewhere that represents my idea of peace and power. And I know in my heart that what I do now is a valuable and important thing to be doing."

Although we operate on what are called opposing sides of the street, we're much alike, Cracker Jack and me. We're close in age, we grew up in the same tenderloin with approximately the same wish to exit, we've learned by our respective trades that compromise is nothing to blush about, and neither of us appears to be what we truly are. If we changed places tomorrow, the balance in the game of Cops and Robbers in the City of New York would remain relatively undisturbed.

To look at me on duty, you'd swear I spent my days bumming beer and soda cans from trash baskets for the nickel deposits. That's the general idea. I'm supposed to be the cop nobody knows is a cop—I'm supposed to be just another loopy, raggedy moax shambling along the street and nobody looks in the eye for fear I might ask for something.

A good part of my job is to loiter in public places, like parks. This way I keep an eye peeled for trouble and I'm able to keep tabs on the repertory company of Manhattan wiseguys. I move around the city enough so that the operators, who don't like moving outside

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their hard-won turfs, don't recognize me often. Cracker Jack didn't recognize me at first, even though we knew each other well from way back. From back when I had my shoeshine box and he'd get a couple of his pals from over on the other side of Tenth Avenue to help roll me out of a day's earnings.

To look at him now, you'd never believe he used to be one of the gang leaders of Hell's Kitchen on the West Side—which is called Clinton now that the neighborhood's been proclaimed reputable by its new landlords. These days, there are sidewalk cafes all over my old block, with cute tables and ice-cream chairs and skinny roses in Perrier bottles and adorable waiters and waitresses to take your order off menus that list ten kinds of European spring water and twenty-eight kinds of foreign beer and three caviars and goat cheese and potato pancakes with creme fraîche.

When I spotted him that Wednesday in Bryant Park, behind the library, he looked something like I imagined one of the corporate types Sandy talked about would. He wore a striped linen-cotton sports jacket, which I figured to be from Salvatore Ferragamo at about seven hundred the copy, a linen shirt by Matsuda for maybe two hundred, pleated linen trousers, Guccis, and a flowered silk tie. I was wearing purple-rayon pants I'd found lying on a bench in Tompkins Square Park, a yellow windbreaker with holes in the elbows, a black T-shirt with the logo of a rock band called The Police, seven-year-old black sneakers from Lamston's minus most of the laces, and a beat-up orange cap with an embroidered crucifix over the bill to illustrate the name of some bible college in Louisiana. I thought the T-shirt a nice comic touch since it covered the N.Y.P.D. gold shield chained around my neck that accompanied my shoulder-holstered .44 Charter Arms Bulldog and the .32 automatic Baretta Puma strapped to my left ankle.

Cracker Jack's name was Jackie Finnegan a time ago. He ran the Finnegan Boys from a wood-and-tin shed that backed up to a whorehouse on West Forty-sixth near the old New York Central rails. The whorehouse was operated by a pinch-faced, blind madam locally famous for having six toes on her right foot and for admitting you into her parlor if she felt there was an outside chance of your being eighteen.

By the standards of the day and place, the Finnegan Boys were small stuff. Contract murders was bread-and-butter for a certain couple of families over in Brooklyn, extortion belonged to the moustachios down in the social clubs of Mulberry Street, numbers be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

longed to Harlem, safe-cracking was anybody's business since it was a skilled trade, kickbacks were the property of City Hall and the true-believers of our free-enterprise system, and Wall Street had the monopoly on gentlemanly bank jobs and smooth swindles—which goes to show you how some things never change. Left to the likes of the Finnegan Boys were the relatively innocent pursuits of tipping over Puerto Rican bodegas up in the West Sixties before there was Lincoln Center, mugging rubes in Times Square, and generally thieving off guys like me they knew for a fact didn't belong to any rival gang.

But Jackie's boyos didn't spend all their time honing skills in the sociopathic arts and sciences. They did the same things the rest of us in the neighborhood did—which was mostly street games, since nobody in Hell's Kitchen owned a television set let alone a Frigidaire. It was a far piece from the all-American youthful idyll on the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post*, but there were worse things we could have been doing, and the hard-working folks hanging out the tenement windows with their elbows cushioned on pillows seemed to breathe easier when they could watch us playing Annie-Over or Ballie-Callie or stoopball or Colly-Up. Or Jackie's favorite, All-ee All-ee in Free.

This is what I was thinking when I spotted Jackie Finnegan in Bryant Park—how he used to like yelling "All-ee all-ee in free" when he ran through all the obstacles and was home safe.

I'd been working the vicinity of the library for about a week, on a detail with the Manhattan Narcotics Squad that came on orders from the Mayor's office. The idea was to clean up Bryant Park, the library's back yard.

"By this," I said to my boss, Inspector Tommy Neglio, "I assume that once again someone with deep pockets and Hizzoner's ear has ventured beyond his penthouse to discover that sin stalks Gotham."

"That's pretty much it," Neglio said. "Think of it like a vacation, Hock. It's Mickey Mouse political duty, but then politics is pretty much cartoons."

Of course, it wasn't just the Mayor of New York City who was blowing on about drugs. Just the other night while I was watching my old black-and-white Philco at home, NBC announced it was preempting *TV Bloopers and Practical Jokes* for a special message from the White House. Then President and Mrs. Reagan, holding hands, preached about the evils of dope, which I figured was as likely to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

purify a schoolyard as a Sunday sermon about fallen women was likely to make a congregation chaste. The Reagans went on to suggest that if we all just said no we would soon see a drug-free America. This despite thousands of years of history in which people have variously smoked, snorted, or injected their way between paradise and suicide while the world watched and scolded with barely the slightest comprehension of the act or the meaning of taking drugs.

Not long before that, a certain United States senator from New York, along with a certain hyperambitious United States District Attorney for Southern New York, donned wigs, sunglasses, and Army-surplus jackets and invited TV news crews along for a ride uptown to Washington Heights where, lo and behold, the intrepid duo unearthed a real live crack dealer. The fact that they scored some roxanne one day in Washington Heights was not a significant scoop to the people who lived there since anybody over the age of ten was able to finger the corner pusher for the TV cameras, even if he wasn't wearing a wig and dark glasses.

Practically speaking, the way I figure you can please the big and little bosses in the event of a flourishing drug trade in the middle of a sizeable park in midtown Manhattan is to make the park less hospitable for a while to your perpetrators of low aesthetic appeal. This means the dour simians in the hooded sweatshirts and boosted high-tops who chant at the passersby: *Set you straight, man? I got splim right here. You want Red? Strawberry? Got some China White, too, man. Ecstasy. Crack it up, crack it up. Pass me by, you don't get high—*

Nancy Reagan informs televisionland that these characters are nothing but icky drug-pushers. Kids up in Washington Heights who don't always have enough to eat and who can't see any percentage in school when the only jobs available are at hamburger stands, see these characters driving around in great big cars and flashing great big wads of cash and they understand that even a society that can offer them nothing but a career in hamburgers measures them by such things as cars and cash. While Mrs. Reagan does her homily, there are others who figure on moving in on the pushers by organizing them as middle-men in a vast national economy, still others who see the enterprise as an excellent means of capitalizing some more acceptable venture. And I'm not the only cop around who's here to tell you that decadence wouldn't stand a chance if not for moralizing in high places.

Anyway, as for the creeps in Bryant Park, it's no bigger trick to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bust this bunch than it is to roust a sleeping wino. What you do with your low-level pusher is run a basic three-cop A-B-C tail on him, his runner, and his steerer and you make yourself three tidy collars—and then three nobodies spend a little pre-trial time up at Riker's Island. Only the odds are they won't emerge rehabilitated.

If the people who own the government ever get serious about crimping the biggest business in America, banks all over the country will be turned inside out to track all the money-laundering and tax evasion that's going on because of it. Which is precisely how the Feds finally got Capone, by the way. Back in the days of Scarface and Prohibition, though, the government had Elliot Ness. Today the government is full of guys who want us all to take the Scout's oath and then line up obediently and pee into paper cups for the chemist, and to hell with hungry kids in Washington Heights.

Me, I'm mainly paid to go along with the program like everybody else. Which I do because I enjoy getting paid on a regular basis. What I wouldn't give, though, for just one legitimate bust where it might do some good.

Meanwhile, I'd been making my share of Mickey Mouse collars on the cockamamie Bryant Park detail, though I can't tell you that I was at peak performance, or that the temptation to coop was entirely resisted, what with Sandy being so convenient just inside the library. And then I spotted Jackie Finnegan. Cracker Jack.

Everything about him perked my cop interest.

For one thing, it was half past eleven on a Wednesday morning and there he was, sitting in Bryant Park. This was not right. Guys dressed like he was wouldn't be coming out from their nice air-conditioned offices for another hour, if at all. He wasn't a tourist and he wasn't a retiree come to feed pigeons. And if he was any sort of genuine gentleman of leisure on a torrid August day in the city, he would have been, at the very least, in a nice cool movie house.

For another thing, he got up from the bench where he was sitting when his wristwatch went off. It was one of those contraptions with moon phases and space time and California time and calculators and, in the case of Jackie's particular model, a digital rendition of the first eight bars of "My Old Kentucky Home" to remind him it was time for something important. Jackie Finnegan may have learned some about the hierarchy of haberdashers, but his timepiece was pure Canal Street.

He walked casually from his bench in a patch of grey-green shade

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

toward the stairs at the northwest entrance to the park. He took a good look around him, like he expected somebody was watching him—which I was, while I pawed through a wire basket full to the top with day-old crusts off Blimpie sandwiches, soggy cardboard coffee cups with lipstick-stained cigarette butts inside them, empty bottles of Thunderbird wine, crumpled-up pages from *El Diario*, a couple of pairs of pantyhose with long runs in them, and a bouquet of musty plastic roses. Not a deposit can or bottle to be had.

Jackie stepped out of the park and headed toward a cluster of pay telephones at the corner of Forty-second and Sixth Avenue. I followed him, hoping to get within earshot of his side of whatever conversation he was about to have. I waited for him to pull a quarter out of his pocket, but he didn't make any such move. Instead, one of the phones rang and he picked up the receiver like he was sitting at home waiting for a friend to call. That's when I first heard his new street name.

"You got Cracker Jack here," he said. "What's—"

But that was all I heard due to the honking horns and the wailings of hair-trigger car sirens brought to us every day by the folks from out of town. There was also the matter of an inventive panhandler I see all over town, an old leathery-faced guy who always wears an Uncle Sam suit and sings "The Star-Spangled Banner" until you pay him to shut up. Uncle Sam, in keeping with the spirit of the moment, was parading around with a poster on a stick that read *Attack Crack* and passing his stars-and-stripes top hat for coins. The last time I'd seen him, his sign was a photographic blowup of a starving Ethiopian child and the time before that it was *Help the Homeless* and before that it was *Give a Hand to Our Farmers*. Uncle Sam was the poor man's TV network and a drug called crack was the critical yarn of the hour.

As a young woman dropped change into his hat, Uncle Sam saw me and called, "Hey, Hock, old sock! How's things on the beat?" And just over his shoulder, Jackie Finnegan turned and looked straight at me, and made me. He said something into the telephone and hung up. I dropped a dollar into Uncle's top hat and walked over to speak to Jackie.

"What d'ya know, Neil Hockaday, the old choirboy himself," he said. "Ya hump, I heard ya was a cop." He looked me up and down. "So what happened? This ain't no uniform like I seen at no Emerald Society ball." He stuck out a hand for me to take and the sun gleamed on his buffed nails. He should have learned to manicure his speech

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as well as his nails. He still talked like a flat-nosed B-movie roughneck, like the bully I feared and loathed from the rickety clubhouse on Forty-sixth Street. With every word, he reminded me that Jackie Finnegan was a part of my past that was not fondly remembered. I hadn't thought about him in decades—now here I was, unforgiving a forgotten man's sins. This is no doubt why I'm a cop and no priest. But I took hold of his outstretched hand anyhow and we pumped. It seemed the natural thing for a couple of grownups to do. Nevertheless, I was delighted to notice the ravages time had left on my old adversary.

I'd been one of the few from the old neighborhood to beat its deadening odds. War had claimed my father, but my mother was no slouch on her own and my Uncle Liam from the other side sent us a monthly draft from the Bank of Dublin tucked inside his letters. I finished high school and even went on to college. Jackie was closer to the Hell's Kitchen statistical norm—he dropped out of school at sixteen and kept right on dropping. I didn't know who his folks were and I don't think anybody else did, either. He slept in the clubhouse when he wasn't out in the street and he wasn't the type you questioned closely on anything. He was good as a punk-kid hood, but he wasn't fortunate in the big leagues, where you can't operate solo very well and where good help is hard to find. One by one, the best of the Finnegan Boys wised up or got locked up or drafted or died and Jackie was left leading a gang that not only couldn't shoot straight but had trouble tying shoelaces.

The first time Jackie was busted as an adult was because during an otherwise nicely done stick-up on the main floor of Wanamaker's, one of his partners dropped his billfold in the notions department. The billfold contained a strip of penny-arcade snapshots of him and a homely girl and the cops didn't have a hard job nailing the dummy, sweating him overnight, and then rounding up his cohorts, including Jackie. So Jackie was sent up the river and stayed there full term, due to the large number of entries in his juvenile court ledger.

When he got out, he found his old digs ripped apart for the firewood by the bums who lived in the weeds and litter alongside the idle rails that used to carry freight. I heard he got into a fight sometime after he was back in the old neighborhood and he shot and killed somebody and went up for a second time on a manslaughter rap.

Now we were standing in the sun outside Bryant Park on a Wednesday near noon and Jackie was making sport of my job and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my clothes. I ran my knuckles over one of his Ferragamo lapels. "Good-looking threads, Jackie. What's your line now? You boosting from Barney's or do you pay for this stuff like a citizen?"

A lot of blood traveled up his neck and into his face, making his skin as red as his hair. There's a certain kind of ex-con who gets it into his head that a couple of stretches in stir wins him absolution from all further suspicion—guys like Jackie, who maybe think of time served as something that should certify respect, like a diploma. "Ya still gotcha one smart mouth, Hock." He pronounced it "mout." "And I'd bet a hunnert bucks yer still livin' like a friggin' choirboy chump."

I shrugged. "Yeah, maybe you're right. I guess I'm not cut out to be a leader of men like you, huh?" He looked at his watch and scanned the street and the park. "I gotta be headin' off now. I'm a busy man. I ain't sayin' it's a pleasure bumpin' into ya like this, Hock, 'cause it ain't."

As he turned, I said to him, "I'll bet a hundred we meet again, Cracker Jack." Finnegan paled, probably wondering how much else I'd heard of his telephone conversation. "I'm watching you, chump, and time's on my side," I said.

He jabbed his hand in the air, turned his back, and walked toward Fifth Avenue along Forty-second, where I used to shine shoes and sometimes lost a whole day's labor to him and his toughs. But now Jackie walked with a jitter down the same street he practically owned as a kid, looking deflated, like a fifty-year-old man who's just lost his job and realizes nobody cares.

It would have been ideal if I could have picked Sandy up at work and gone someplace nice for a bite with nobody to wonder how it was that a knockout like her was walking around in public with a character dressed like me. But to make things simple, I stopped into a deli and picked up a few things for the two of us and brought it to the library where we'd lunch at Sandy's desk up along the wide catwalk overlooking the Main Reading Room.

"I smelled you halfway up the stairs," the lovely Ms. Gilford said to me after I'd climbed the short flight of wrought-iron steps to her cluttered desk and she'd kissed my stubbled cheek. "When you bring a girl food, you make sure she knows it's coming, don't you? God help me if you ever give me a corsage."

"I love you, too, sweet-talker."

We sat around her desk like it was a picnic table in the park. "So

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

let's see what we've got here," Sandy said. I proudly set out my purchases: two steaming hamburgers with Bermuda onion, A-1, and chili sauce on kaiser rolls; a pound of redskin potatoes in sour cream and chives; a half pound of chopped herring; a couple of hard-boiled eggs; a container of grilled mushrooms; a small box of smoked gouda-cheese slices; four kosher dills; and two cans of Dr. Brown's cream soda.

Sandy didn't look so lively at the prospect. "You're not a salad-bar man, are you?" she said, looking disgusted all of a sudden. "You're going to *eat* that?" she asked, horrified, as I peeled strips of waxed paper away from my hamburger.

"What?"

"That poison."

"If you mean the burger, yes." I took a big wet bite of the thing. "And I'm probably going to live to tell the story."

"You never heard of Satchel Paige's first rule of longevity?" Sandy didn't know good food, but she knew good baseball. My mouth was full of poison, so she didn't wait for an answer. "He said, 'Avoid fried meats, which angry the blood.' "

I took another bite and she looked away, horrified.

Then, abruptly, she got up from her chair and crossed to the railing at the edge of the catwalk, something below having caught her scornful eye.

She stood there watching for several seconds and then, as quickly as she'd bolted her chair, she returned to the desk and said urgently, "I don't know what's happening down there, but it sure isn't scholarship."

"Let me have a look," I said. I wiped my hands and got up to see whatever it was Sandy was worked up about.

What it was was amazing. Jackie Finnegan sat at one of the long reading tables arguing with somebody in a dark-blue three-piece pinstripe number like you see wrapped around silver-haired guys with three-dollar cigars in corporate boardrooms loaded with mahogany. There was a leather attaché on a chair between them and they were tugging at it—Cracker Jack and the captain of industry having a tiff. One of the thousand or so daily drug deals in New York wasn't going down according to Hoyle.

When I told her as much, Sandy cried, "Not in *my* library!" and headed for the stairway. I caught her by the elbow before her foot hit the first riser at the same time I saw Jackie's face upturned to the commotion above and reach for something inside his jacket.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I grabbed Sandy's shoulder and held her hard. "Listen to me," I said. "Dial 911 and tell them an officer needs assistance—I'm pursuing two perps, one or both presumed armed and dangerous. Give them precise location. Then call your security office and tell them the same thing and that you've just called the cops."

By the time I reached the main floor, Pinstripes was on his feet, marching gingerly up the aisle of the Main Reading Room toward the exit sign, with Jackie hard on his tail. There was a look on Pinstripe's face like he'd just been handed a summons by the IRS and his shorts had gone sour—or like a guy with a cocked gun pressed into the small of his back, which I guessed was probably the case.

Jackie looked queasy, too. Sweat rolled down his face and he couldn't wipe it off, what with one hand occupied by the cannon in Pinstripes' back and the other hanging onto the attaché like it was jammed full of little green pictures of Grover Cleveland. It was easy reading his mind right then: conviction on a third bust for a Class A felony in the State of New York meant retirement in a clammy cellblock at Sing-Sing instead of a nice, sunny Florida nowheresville with trailers and shuffleboard courts.

I figured the percentage for relying on Sandy to follow through on what I told her was more favorable than doing anything to inspire a shaky Jackie Finnegan with thoughts of going down in flames. So I ambled up to Pinstripes and Jackie, blocked their path, and said, "You fellows hungry? I got a spare hamburger going to waste upstairs."

"Out of my way, Hock, or I'll drill this bastard right through his friggin' kidneys, then his friggin' lawyers'll be all over yer cop ass."

"Calm down, Jackie my friend. Don't you think I can see your end of the picture in this? Your boy here is your laundry man and his cut of your business is killing you. Am I right?"

Finnegan nodded. A long time ago, I learned from an insurance salesman to ask questions that can only be answered in the affirmative when you want ink on the dotted line.

"You've been dealing crack, long enough to buy a lot of stuff, like the clothes. But pretty soon lots of stuff gets to be old stuff. And maybe you've got an idea of going straight now that you've got your pile. Am I right?"

Jackie nodded.

"But you've got this little matter of where to stash all that money

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

so it's going to be clean for you. So you need your regulation citizen banker, which is where this guy figures in the equation."

The banker managed to say, "I want to talk to my lawyer."

"Shut up," I said. "I'll read you your rights when I'm damned good and ready."

I continued talking to Finnegan. "So your banker here is juicing you like only these guys from the Union Club can squeeze. Tell you what, though—there's nothing I'd enjoy more than making a nice messy collar on your pinstriped pimp buddy here. That ought to drain the blue blood clean out of him, wouldn't you say?"

Finnegan nodded. He wasn't overly bright, but he was beginning to catch my drift.

"So that, my friend, is my promise," I said. "You turn your crud friend over to me and I'll hand him over to the uniforms that ought to be filling the whole damn library by now. You can see over my shoulder out the doorway, Jackie, am I right? You see an army of cops out there?"

His eyes shot over my shoulder and he nodded. And I heard a lot of feet behind me and felt relief washing over me like a scotch in a warm apartment on a cold, snowy night.

"You got yourself a reprieve, Jackie," I said. "All you have to do is give me that gun and it's nothing but something that gets lost in my pocket and I tell my boss that I used you as an operative to help bust Mr. Pinstripes, the corrupt banker here. That's how it'll play in court and I'll back you all the way."

Pinstripes was drooling so badly he spotted the tops of his eelskin wingtips. Everything I'd said I meant. Finnegan could turn state's evidence on a *pro forma* bust and slither out of whatever he was caught up in and they both knew it.

"You on the level, Hock? I'm like yer snitch or somethin' and this here president of yer friendly neighborhood bank takes the fall?"

"Pretty sweet, isn't it?"

Finnegan nodded again. And before I could grab his well tailored sleeve, the banker was running pell-mell toward the boys in blue waiting outside. I saw Sandy out with the uniforms, pointing me out to them. And next to me, frozen in a space that offered a clean, clear shot for a sharpshooter, stood the unfortunate Jackie Finnegan, extending a gun in the general direction of an officer in need of assistance. And anyone previously in the line of fire had dived below the heavy library tables when the banker started shouting.

A single crack of rifle fire dropped him. . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jackie Finnegan lay on his back with his hands over the small hole just below his rib cage.

I put my hand under his head and said to him, "I didn't set you up for this, Jackie. I'd take the collar on the banker over you any day."

Which was God's truth. I'd turned when I heard the running cop feet coming my way. I saw the pinstriped banker talking to a uniform, and if I read his lips right he was saying, "My lawyer will handle all this." Something like that.

The uniforms were all around me now. There was nothing they could do but get an amubulance and tell the rubbernecks to go on home. I cradled Finnegan's head and listened to him pour out what he thought he had to do to square things with somebody in this vale.

"Lissen ta me, choirboy," he said. It was hard for him to get the words out. He couldn't get enough air into his lungs. "Be glad for yer good breaks, that's all. Don't be feelin' sorry about me. I'm surprised I made it long as I did."

He paused. "I wantcha ta know somethin'," he said. "Ya remember that ol' six-toed whore who ran the house out front of my place?" His eyes were heavy.

I leaned close so he could see I was nodding and said, "Yeah, what about her?"

"She's my mama. Some chance I had of it, hey?" He coughed blood. "I never let anybody know nothin' about them two. They was only misery t'me. Hell, the only decent time I ever had in my whole damn friggin' life was playin' in the streets, y'know?"

And then with his last gasp he said, "All-ee all-ee in free."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED MARKET

ELLERY QUEEN — published 13 times a year. CLASSIFIED AD rate is $3.20 per word — payable in advance — ($48.00 minimum). Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be

AUTHOR'S SERVICE

LOOKING for a publisher? Learn how you can have your book published, promoted, distributed. Send for free booklet. HP-5, Vantage Press, 516 W. 34th St., New York, NY 10001.

AUTOMOBILES & MIDGET CARS

IS it true...Jeeps For $44 Through The Government? Call For Facts! 1-312-742-1142 Ext. 4674.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK! Join our successful authors. Publicity, advertising, beautiful books. All subjects invited. Send for fact-filled booklet and free manuscript report. Carlton Press, Dept. SMR, 11 West 32 Street, New York 10001.

FREE LIST! Used Hardcover mystery and detective fiction. Dunn's Mysteries, Box 2544, Meriden, CT 06450.

SEND 25¢ for Large Listing of Mystery and Detective Books. Canford, Drawer 216E, Freeville, N.Y. 13068.

100,000 science fiction and mystery paperbacks, magazines, hardcovers. Free catalogs! Pandora's, Box Z-54, Neche, ND 58265-0133.

READ "How to Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Instructive booklet tells how to write an effective classified ad. Also includes certificates worth $2.00 toward a classified ad in any of our publications. For your copy send $2.25 (includes postage) to I. M. Bozoki, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

FREE CATALOG. Used hardback mystery, crime and detective books. Steve Powell, Dept. DP, The Hideaway, Bar Harbor, ME 04609.

MYSTERIES/Thrillers. Free list available. Firsts, hardbacks, paperbacks. Time and Again Books, 364 Main, North Andover, Mass. 01845.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

AARDVARKS Book Detectives. $3. next 4 catalogues. World's largest mystery stock. Box 15070, Orlando, Florida 32858-5070.

THE Fugitive Feet, Roberta Burroughs. Puzzle-type historical mystery, Northwestern forest setting. Gem Press, 731 Preston, Lewiston, Idaho 83501. $3.75

WRITERS! Lawrence Block's books, tapes, seminars really help. Details free. WFYL, 3750-E Estero, Ft. Myers Beach, FL 33931.

NEW BOOKLET reveals professional secrets, means profit for you when selling your home. $5.00: 6888-A N. Tranquility, Sacramento, CA 95823.

HALF PRICE MYSTERY/SCI-FI. Send for free catalog. Book Place, 2710 Middlefield Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94306.

MYSTERY BOOKS—Out-of-print and hard to find. Send for catalog: Rasselas Books, PO Box 224, Winnetka, IL 60093.

ARMCHAIR DETECTIVES: New and used mystery/detective books, hardcover. Below-Market prices. $1.00 (refundable for catalog. Jay Garver, Claysburg, PA 16625.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

$1,000 Weekly Home Business Directory. Free Details. Name and address to: Box 1610-DP Darien, Connecticut, 06820-1610.

STAY HOME! MAKE MONEY ADDRESSING ENVELOPES. VALUABLE GENUINE OFFER. 20¢. Write Lindco, 3636-DA Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60559.

"$1,000's WEEKLY!" MAILING LETTERS! FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY! EXCITING FREE DETAIL$! START IMMEDIATELY! WRITE: $UCCESS, #605-DPG, DRESHER, PA 19025.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

included in the next issue please send order and remittance to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Manager, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

MAKE MONEY. Lots of it. Stuffing Envelopes. Proven Successful. No Experience Necessary. Start Immediately. New Era Enterprises, M., 1589 Albion, Rexdale, Ontario M9V 1B6. Enclose a self-addressed envelope.

HOMEWORKERS! EARN 60¢ each envelope you return to us, according to instructions. Write: Distributors, Box 431-DP, Lynbrook, New York 11563.

REAL ESTATE FORECLOSURES, Representatives needed for this profitable business. No cash required. Free information. Horizon Financial Corporation, 1404 N. State Rd. 7, Suite 342, Dept. Al, Pompano Beach, FL 33063.

YOUR NAME sent to over 300 Business Opportunities $3.00: Renda, Box 339-D, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.

$200 Profit Daily With Your Own Professional Housecleaning Service. No Investment. Details: Westfield, Box 83-F, Middleton, Wisconsin 53562.

BUY IT WHOLESALE

400,000 BARGAINS Below Wholesale! Many Free! Liquidations...Closeouts...Job Lots...Single Samples. Free Details: Worldwide Bargainhunters, Box 730-IO, Holland, MI 49423.

SINGAPORE, HONG KONG, TAIWAN directories. Listing 11,000 suppliers, 20,000 products. Buy direct! Information $1.00: Merrick Distributing, Box 274B, Merrick, NY 11566.

BARGAINS! Buy Wholesale and Below! Name Brands. Appliances... Furniture... Sports Equipment... Televisions... Cameras... Watches... Jewelry... Thousands More. Free Details. Write Today. Bargainhunters Opportunities, Box 730-IO. Holland, MI 49423.

FAMILY BIBLES, DIRECT-FROM-PUBLISHER. Write: Fireside, Dept. W, Box 118 Wichita, KS 67201.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

WITCHCRAFT Occult Miracle Power Secrets Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Now accepting students. 1502-AN, New Bern, N.C. 28560.

UNIVERSITY DEGREES! Economical home study for Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate. Prestigious faculty counsels for independent study and life experience credits. Free information—Richard Crews, M.D. (Harvard), President, Columbia Pacific University, 1415 Third St., Dept. 2M6, San Rafael, CA 94901; Toll Free: 800/227-1617, Ext. 480; California: 800/772-3545, Ext. 480.

FREE COLLEGE TAPE External Degree Programs Business Administration, Public Administration, Law (Qualify Bar Admission). Fully Accredited, Financial Aid, (800) 847-0005, (314) 426-0653 La Salle University, 3628 Saint Gregory, Saint Louis, Missouri 63074.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

A gift sure to please—ISAAC ASIMOV's SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE, published monthly. Send $19.50 for 13 issues (includes shipping & postage) to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 1933, Marion, OH 43305.

HYPNOTISM

FREE hypnotism, sleep learning catalog! Tape cassettes, books, equipment. DLMH, Box 487, Anaheim, CA 92805.

LOANS BY MAIL

BORROW $25,000 "OVERNIGHT". Any purpose. Keep indefinitely! Free Report! Success Research, Box 19739-SS, Indianapolis, IN 46219.

VISA® Obtained Easily! Been Turned Down? Bankrupt? No Credit? No Problem! Write Immediately for Details! Credit-DP687, Box 2298, Sandusky, Ohio 44870. 1-(419)625-3868.

BORROW $500-$40,000! On signature. Without collateral. Keep indefinitely! Action #I-02, 3660 Wilshire, Los Angeles, CA 90010.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Continued

LOANS BY MAIL—Cont'd

SIGNATURE Cash Loans! Application Rushed! Plus the Most Exciting Financial Techniques to get you Cash! MBG-DP687, Box 2298, Sandusky, Ohio 44870. 1-(419)625-3868

MAILING LISTS

COMPUTERIZED—opportunity seekers. Adhesive labels. Guaranteed deliverable! 500/$25; 1000/$40; 5000/$175. Dealer's Co-Operative, 4158-I Calhoun, Gary, IN 46408. Visa/Mastercard. 1-(219)838-7099/1-(800) 992-9405.

COMPUTERIZED GUARANTEED MAIL ORDER NAMES! SPECIAL 2000 NAMES—$29.00. Opportunity seekers. Zip-sorted pressure sensitive labels. 22¢ refund for undeliverables. Mailed within 24 hrs. 1st class. 5000-$65, 10,000-$100, 200,000-$190, 40,000-$340, 100,000-$750, 200,000-$1300. DEALERS WANTED. Sell names. Start FREE. The Brown Co., RR 2, Box 151, River Falls, Wisconsin 54022.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

$60.00 per Hundred securing-stuffing envelopes from home. Offer-details: Rush stamped self-addressed envelope. Imperial, P-460, X17410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Processing mail! Free Supplies, Postage! No Selling! Information? Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DCM, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

EARN $5,000 ANY WEEKEND! Amazing new system makes it easy. No money needed. Skeptical? FREE PROOF. Write: Crossroads, Box 5097-B8, Babylon, NY 11707.

"1,000'S WEEKLY"! $ECURING/$TUFFING ENVELOPES! $TART IMMEDIATELY! FREE DETAILS! WRITE: ASSOCIATES, #210-DPG, MAPLE GLEN, PA 19002.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

FIRST TIME OPPORTUNITY TO GET RICH EASY. NEW MIRACLE SECRETS! Legal 100%, Honest 200%, Profitable 800%. Guaranteed Plans! Now send $3.00 for details: A-S Int'l Enterprise, 1018 Gold Cres., Dept. 210, Ont., Canada K2B 8C5.

$1000 WEEKLY POSSIBLE! Mailing Envelopes! Easy Guaranteed Income! Free Details: SEVENSTAR, Box 187-D, Niagara Falls, NY 14305.

EXCITING NEWS! Knowledge is the Key to Success. For more information write to: Barnes Publications, 1703 4th, Dept. EQ-5, Woodward, OK 73801.

AMAZING New LCD Watch and gas refillable lighter on wristband. Write: Dawson Products, Box 196, Stoughton, MA 02072.

EASY Business, earn $1,000's Weekly! Free details! Send Stamped Addressed Envelope: Todco, Dept. 3, 4219 W. Olive Ave., Burbank, CA 91505.

CAN YOU STUFF 1000 envelopes for $500.00 weekly? Send six 22¢ stamps. Blume, Box 866714, Plano, TX 75086.

GET RICH! Zero Investment. No Borrowing. Free Details. Money, 6520 Selma (#32Q47), Los Angeles, CA 90028.

THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THE ZIP CODE: please use it when ordering merchandise from classified advertisements. You'll receive faster delivery.

PERSONAL

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Refined, sincere people! 18-80, Identity, Box 315-DT, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068.

YOU'LL MAKE MONEY

SAVE MONEY TOO— BY READING and ANSWERING THESE CLASSIFIED ADS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Continued

PERSONAL—Cont'd

READ "How to Write a Classified Ad That Pulls," Instructive booklet tells how to write an effective classified ad. Also includes certificates worth $2.00 toward a classified ad in any of our publications. For your copy send $2.25 (includes postage) to I.M. Bozoki, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

ORIENTAL ladies seeking correspondence, marriage. Presentations by American husband, Filipina wife. Asian Experience, Box 1214T, Novato, CA 94948.

INSOMNIACS! Get no drug, no trick relief. SASE plus $2.00 to: Sleep, Box 17802, Mesa, AZ 85212.

SINGLES, US/WORLDWIDE, seek enlightened correspondence, sincere friendships. SCANNA INTERNATIONAL-CO3, Box 4, Pittsford, NY 14534.

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS SEEK FRIENDSHIP AND MARRIAGE. American—Mexican—Philippine—European. Photo selection FREE! Latins, Box 1716-DD, Chula Vista, CA 92012.

HIGH SCHOOL AT HOME, no classes. Diploma awarded, low cost. Information free, call toll free anytime 1-800-228-5600, or write American School, Dept. 388, 850 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637.

SUPERLEARNING! Triple learning speed through music! Develop Supermemory; control stress; tap potentials. Free—book excerpt & catalog. (Distributors wanted.) Superlearning, 450-Z4 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10123.

PRINTING, MIMEOGRAPHING & MULTIGRAPHING

PRINT Booklets, 3¢. Print 1000 8½x11, $15.12. Booklet Planning-Pricer Free Speedibooks, 23860-2F Miles, Cleveland, Ohio 44128.

SALESMEN-DISTRIBUTORS

SELL IMPRINTED T-SHIRTS, JACKETS, CAPS, straight commission basis for 50-year old Co. Universal Screen Prtg. Co., Inc., Box 12657, Gastonia, NC 28053.

SONGWRITERS

POEMS WANTED. Songs recorded and published. Radio-TV promotions. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

TAPES & CASSETTES

OLDTIME radio programs. Mysteries, adventure, suspense, science fiction, comedies. Classic tapes. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froelich, Heritage Farm, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349.

THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL! Sherlock Holmes "The Case of the Noble Bachelor" audio cassette and our catalog containing 46 Sherlock Holmes titles (total value $7.) this month only. $3.95. Westlake House, 31220 LaBaya Dr. #110, Westlake Village, CA 91362.

UNUSUAL BOOKS

THE INTELLIGENCE LIBRARY: Many unique books & official manuals on RESTRICTED subjects—Bugging, Wiretapping, Locksmithing, Covert Investigation, & MUCH MORE. Free brochures, MENTOR, DP, 135-53 No. Blvd., Flushing, N.Y. 11354.

For Greater Savings...Results...and Profits...

PLACE YOUR AD IN ONE OF OUR SPECIAL COMBINATIONS:
Combo #1, Combo #2, or Combo #3.

Each combination is designed to give your ad the largest audience available.

Each combination offers you a Special Discount Rate.
For further information write to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Manager, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INDEX TO VOLUME EIGHTY-NINE—JANUARY–JUNE 1987

ABBOTT, JOHN: Contradiction in Terms	January	110
ADCOCK, THOMAS: Cracker Jack	June	135
No Jury Will Ever Hang You	February	95
AMEN, CAROL: Last Testament	April	86
ASIMOV, ISAAC: The Snatched Purse	March	4
The Stamp	June	87
The Teddy Bear	May	28
BANKIER, WILLIAM: The Body in the Car	January	79
The Brass Cat Is Not for Sale	March	122
Legacy from a Bad Actor	April	65
Oil and Water	June	115
The Rescue of "Two-Kinds" Tuttle	February	68
BARNARD, ROBERT: Breakfast Television	January	34
The Oxford Way of Death	April	26
BAXT, GEORGE: Stroke of Genius	June	20
BAYER, ANN: Blood Relations	February	60
BENSEN, D. R.: A Heady Thought	March	153
Brother, Can You Spare a Brother?	May	60
Career Move	May	61
BISKIN, MIRIAM: Bridge Over Troubled Waters	March	2
BOSWORTH, JANE: Whippin' Wildcats	January	98
BROWN, MARGERY FINN: In the Forests of Riga the Beasts Are Very Wild Indeed	February	118
BURGAMY, ELIZABETH W.: No Lover of Cats	May	113
CARPENTER, CARLETON: The Tease	March	46
CLARKE, ANNA: The Secret Path	March	22
COSTELLO, MATTHEW J.: Playing with Murder	January	75
CROSS, AMANDA: Tania's No Where	March	68
DAVIDSON, AVRAM: Little Black Book	March	100
DUBOIS, BRENDAN: Cellmates	April	20
Room To Hide	June	30
A Ticket Out	January	61
EBERT, J.: Sleeping Is Dangerous	January	111
EQMM AUTHORS JUSTIFY THEIR EXISTENCE	March	17
EQMM READERS AWARD 1986	May	71
FRASER, ANTONIA: On the Battlements	June	78
FREEMAN, DAVID: Another Bottle of Petrus	May	40
FREMLIN, CELIA: Guilt Feelings	February	22
GALLAGHER, ROGER: Access Violation	May	104
GEORGE, MARY ANN: Where There's Smoke	June	43
HAFEN, BARBARA: Watched Like Birds	June	98
HAIR, CAROL: The Wrong Choice	March	109
HELLER, KEITH: Man's Inherited Death	March	52
HENDERSON, ROBERT: The Intruder	February	34

(continued on page 157)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INDEX TO VOLUME EIGHTY-NINE—JANUARY–JUNE 1987

(continued from page 156)

HENSON, ROBERT: Lizzie Borden in the P.M.	January	126
HIGHSMITH, PATRICIA: Under a Dark Angel's Eye	February	137
HOCH, EDWARD D.: The Gypsy Wizard	May	118
Leopold and the Four O'Clock Felon	February	81
Poker Game at the Golden Nugget	March	30
Punishment for a Gypsy	January	22
The Spy and the Short-Order Cipher	June	3
The Theft of the Lost Slipper	April	3
HOLDING, JAMES: Another Grave Tone	March	88
More Grave Tones	March	3, 86
HUBIN, ALLEN J.: The Jury Box	February–June	
IRELAN, PATRICK: The Witness	April	40
JANOWITZ, TAMA: Case History #15: Melinda	May	36
KEATING, H. R. F.: A Common Error	February	112
Nil by Mouth, Inspector Ghote	May	4
LAMBURN, NELL: Summer in the Country	March	90
Taking Care of Miss Mollie	May	48
LODI, EDWARD: Psycho	February	94
MEIER, LESLIE: I Could Never Say No to Lloyd	March	104
MELYAN, HELENE: The Dog Thief	April	61
MOCHULSKI, DOLORES: Circumvention	May	117
MOSIMAN, BILLIE SUE: The Growl	May	18
NATSUKI, SHIZUKO: A Very Careful Man	January	44
NEWMAN, JOEL: A Hot Summer Night	June	129
OLSON, DONALD: The Signal	April	112
ORLICK, GLORIA: Cryptic Remark	April	111
OVERMYER, JANET: Guess Who?	February	59
PENTECOST, HUGH: Jericho's Way	February	127
POTTS, JEAN: Two on the Isle	January	4
POWELL, JAMES: The Brim Whistle	February	44
The Mad Scientist, J.G.	April	117
Wingtips	June	62
POWERS, BILLIE LEE: Betsy's Dictionary	June	44
ROQUEVERT, GERMAINE: The Key to Albert's Closet	April	133
ROSSO, JOAN D.: Wooden You Know?	March	20
RUDOSKI, ALICE: Hit and Miss	June	134
SAAVEDRA, PEDRO J.: Wiggins	May	153
Wolfe	May	153
SAVAGE, ERNEST: Hell Hath No Fury	February	4
SCOTT, JEFFRY: The Only Sure Way	May	90
The Secretly Crazy Girl	January	115
SCOTT, JEFFRY, and RICHARD SIMPSON: They *Will* Do It	June	105
SIMPSON, DOROTHY: The Person Inside	April	46
SIMPSON, RICHARD, and JEFFRY SCOTT: They *Will* Do It	June	105

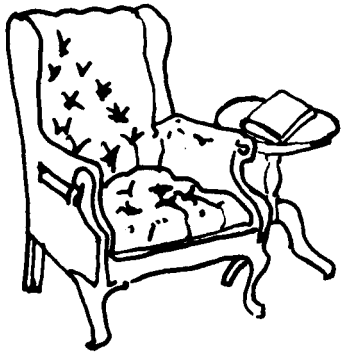
(continued on page 158)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INDEX TO VOLUME EIGHTY-NINE—JANUARY–JUNE 1987

(continued from page 157)

SUTER, JOHN F.: Come Down from the Hills	April	98
TURNBULL, PETER: McNaught's Obsession	April	137
TWOHY, ROBERT: The Ten-Dollar Bill	May	132
VANDERBILT, HEIDI: Last Call at the Belly-Up Sammy	May	73
	March	135
WHITE, PHYLLIS: Goose Egg	January	125
WOOD, JONATHAN: The Ear-Reddening Move of Shusaku	June	50



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEXT ISSUE...

12 *NEW* stories—including

GEORGE BAXT (about adamant Eve)

PAULA GOSLING (about Mr. Felix)

PETER TURNBULL (about Inspector Donoghue)

EDWARD D. HOCH (about Captain Leopold)

HEIDI VANDERBILT (about blood ties)

WILLIAM BANKIER (about Wimbledon fortnight)

ELEANOR SULLIVAN ..... *Editor*
AMY DANA ..... *Editorial Assistant*
RALPH RUBINO ..... *Corporate Art Director*
GERARD HAWKINS ..... *Associate Art Director*
DENNIS DOYLE ..... *Associate Designer*
CAROLE DIXON ..... *Production Manager*
LINDA I. KOENIG ..... *Production Assistant*
LOUISE MUGAR ..... *Circulation Director, Retail Marketing*
LAURA GUTH ..... *Circulation Director, Subscriptions*
JAMES CAULKINS ..... *Circulation Planning Director*
CYNTHIA MANSON *Subsidiary Rights Director*
FLORENCE EICHIN ..... *Permissions & Contracts Manager*
VEENA RAGHAVAN ..... *Public Relations Promotions Manager*
IRENE BOZOKI ..... *Classified Advertising Manager*
JAMIE FILLON ..... *Advertising Manager*

Advertising Sales Office

NEW YORK
212-557-9100

JOEL DAVIS
President

WILLIAM F. BATTISTA
Publisher

FRED EDINGER
Senior Vice President
Finance

PAULA COLLINS
Senior Vice President
Circulation

CARL BARTEE
Vice President
Manufacturing

STEPHEN POLICOFF
Assistant Vice President
Controller

ELLERY QUEEN
Editor-in-Chief
(1941–1982)

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. Vol. 89, No. 6, Whole No. 531. June 1987. Published 13 times a year, every 28 days, by Davis Publications, Inc., at $1.95 a copy. Annual subscription $19.50 in U.S.A. and possessions; $23.00 elsewhere, payable in advance and in U.S. funds. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 380 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10017. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 1930, Marion, Ohio 43305. **Call (614) 383-3141 with questions regarding your subscription.** Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Canadian third-class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario.

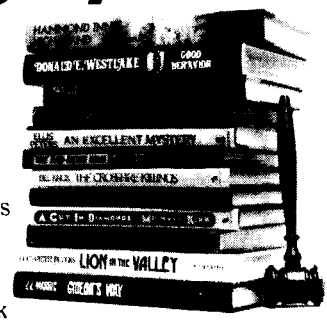
© 1986 Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE® is the registered trademark of Ellery Queen. Printed in U.S.A. Submission must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelope. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.

POSTMASTER: Send form 3579 to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 1930, Marion, Ohio 43305. In Canada return to 628 Monmouth Rd., Windsor, Ontario N8Y3L1. ISSN: 0013-6328.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Take 12 Best-Selling Mysteries for Only $1

A $174.40 Value in Original Publishers' Editions



Try 12 mysteries. We're sure your verdict will be favorable. They're worth $174.40 in publishers' editions—but to introduce you to The Detective Book Club, we'll send you *all 12* spine-tingling novels in four hardbound triple-volumes *for only $1 plus shipping.*

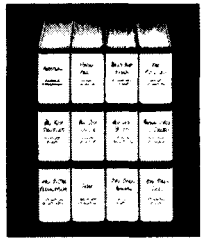
When you become a member of The Detective Book Club there is no minimum number of books you must buy. You may reject any selection before or after you receive it, and you may cancel at any time with no obligation whatsoever.

Save up to 80% on the latest mysteries

Each club selection includes 3 newly published, full-length, unabridged novels by top-notch writers like Westlake, Innes, and Pentecost in one handsome triple-volume, all yours for just $9.95 plus shipping. That's $3.32 per mystery, *saving you 60% to 80%* off the publishers' list prices. Since each hardcover triple-volume is offered to you in convenient, easy-to-read form at less-than-paperback prices, we believe it's an open-and-shut case.

Send no money now

Simply fill out the coupon below and send it to: The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, NY 11576. You'll enjoy a 10-day free trial to examine the evidence and judge for yourself with no obligation. But *act now.* If you love good mysteries, it would be a crime not to accept this offer.



Yes, please enroll me as a member and send me my 4 triple-volumes shown here, containing 12 mysteries. I enclose no money now. I may examine my books for 10 days, then will either accept all 4 volumes for only $1 plus shipping, or return them and owe nothing.

As a member, I will receive free the Club's Preview describing my next selections. I will always have at least 10 days to reject any selection by returning the form provided. I may return any book within 21 days and owe nothing. For each triple-volume I keep, I will send you just $9.95 plus shipping. I may cancel my membership at any time. Satisfaction Guaranteed.

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

WALTER J. BLACK, INC

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB, Roslyn, NY 11576

Since 1942, the best way to get more mystery for your money.

D25M1V 87-BF

Note: Members accepted in USA and Canada only. Offer slightly different in Canada.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

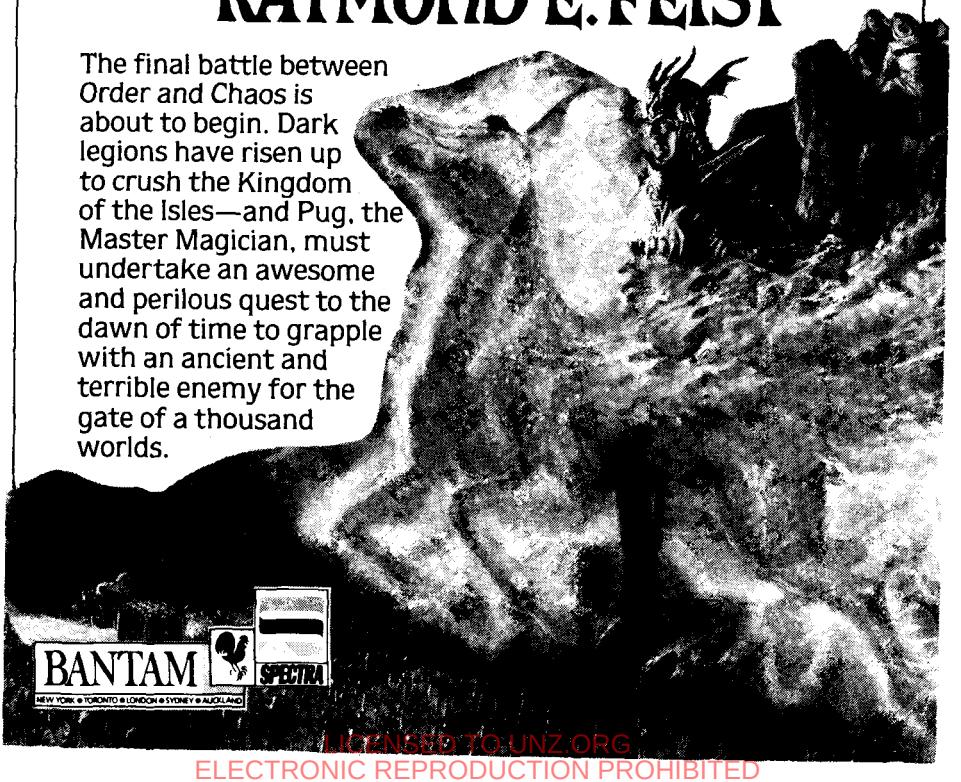
The new masterpiece
of heroic fantasy reaches its
heartstopping conclusion

A DARKNESS AT SETHANON

VOLUME IV IN THE RIFTWAR SAGA
BY

RAYMOND E. FEIST

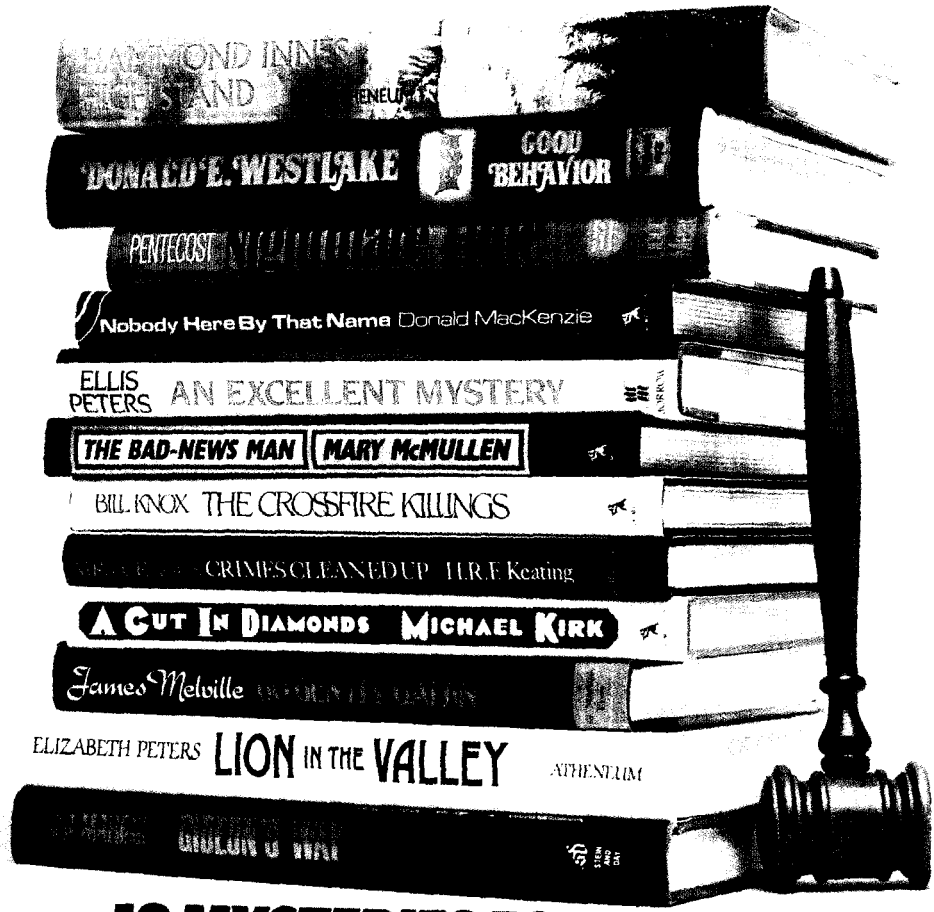
The final battle between Order and Chaos is about to begin. Dark legions have risen up to crush the Kingdom of the Isles—and Pug, the Master Magician, must undertake an awesome and perilous quest to the dawn of time to grapple with an ancient and terrible enemy for the gate of a thousand worlds.



BANTAM SPECTRA
NEW YORK • TORONTO • LONDON • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE.


DONALD E. WESTLAKE
GOOD BEHAVIOR
PENTECOST
Nobody Here By That Name Donald MacKenzie
ELLIS PETERS AN EXCELLENT MYSTERY
THE BAD-NEWS MAN MARY McMULLEN
BILL KNOX THE CROSSFIRE KILLINGS
CRIMES CLEANED UP H.R.F. Keating
A CUT IN DIAMONDS MICHAEL KIRK
James Melville
ELIZABETH PETERS LION IN THE VALLEY
ATHENEUM

12 MYSTERIES FOR ONLY $1

For details see last page.

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED